I.B.TAURIS
TV HORROR
investigating the darker side
of the small screen
LORNA JOWETT and STACEY ABBOTT

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'From *Twin Peaks* to *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*, and *Dark Shadows* to *The Simpsons*, check the index with the lights on, because your favorite show is probably lurking in here somewhere. This thorough, thoughtful and entertaining look at horror on television deserves to be devoured by writers, analysts and fans. You will definitely find something in here to make your pulse jump and your eyes open wide.'

– Jane Espenson, writer/producer: *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Game of Thrones*, *Once Upon a Time*

‘Alert to horror’s histories and hybridities on TV, Lorna Jowett and Stacey Abbott cast a forensic gaze over this previously dark continent. From aesthetics to “kitchen sink gothic” to monster fans, *TV Horror* bristles with brilliant ideas and analyses a wealth of examples. Then: horror on TV was often dismissed as all sizzle and no steak. Now: challenging old debates over authenticity, Jowett and Abbott prove themselves to be the new (scholarly) masters of horror.’
– Matt Hills, author of *The Pleasures of Horror* and *Triumph of a Time Lord*

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TV HORROR

investigating the dark side
of the small screen

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Lorna Jowett

Introduction

Horror Begins at Home

> The whole episode can really be summed up with the term, 'barf'. It's also surprisingly creepy in its own right as well. It's brutal, it's gross and it's entirely disturbing. It's amazing actually that they did air this on TV and even more amazing that I did not see it. If I had seen it, I would probably still be hiding in my closet, terrified that three inbred mutants would beat me to death with a baseball bat if I emerged.
>
> (André Dumas about 'Home', *The Horror Digest*)

A woman gives birth to a baby on the kitchen table; the umbilical cord is cut with scissors; three disfigured men carry the child out into a stormy night to bury it alive (see Fig. 1). In the bright light of day, a group of teenage boys play baseball in a field. As the boy at the plate digs in, waiting for the next pitch, a pool of blood collects around his shoe and the boy looks down to see an infant hand protruding from the earth. This is the opening of 'Home' (4.2), an episode of *The X-Files* that has been repeatedly described as one of the scariest examples of the horror genre on television (Lawson 2009).[1]

'Home' tells the story of the deformed, incestuous and murderous Peacock family, the result of generations of inbreeding. The family is led by Mrs Peacock, a mother who lost both of her arms and legs in a car accident and is now protected by her sons who keep her safe on a board under the bed. While some critics, as discussed throughout this book, have questioned the compatibility of the horror genre with TV, this television episode is replete with horror imagery, including the grotesque and mutilated bodies of the Peacocks, accentuated in

close-up by the episode's chiaroscuro lighting, and the brutal murder of the town sheriff, beaten to death within the presumed safety of his family home as the dulcet tones of Johnny Mathis play on a car radio outside. The narrative, by focusing on such topics as infanticide, bodily mutilation and incest, is both sordid and morbid. Featuring overt allusions to classic television series *The Andy Griffith Show* and its vision of small-town America, 'Home' exposes a dark heritage lurking beneath the surface of America and American television. Rather than denying the presence of horror on television, 'Home' embraces the genre. This episode not only demonstrates the potential for horror on TV but, as Helen Wheatley argues, stands as evidence of a synergy between horror and television as certain events are made all the more frightening by being broadcast on TV within the domestic space (2006). Certainly the scene of the home invasion in which the sheriff is murdered is more unsettling by watching it on a domestic television. This is later mirrored by FBI agents Mulder and Scully's own incursion into the Peacock home – a space made monstrous by shadows, barbed wire, dirt, blood and a series of brutal booby traps that result in the decapitation of the town deputy. Here, home is deadly.

1. 'Home' *The X-Files* (4.2)

The production and reception of 'Home' raises many issues for a discussion of TV horror. While approached by director Kim Manners as a classic example of horror, once the episode was made the creators ran into issues with the network's Standards and Practices department who objected to the scene in which the baby was crying while being buried. The sound of the baby had to be removed in order to downplay the implication that it was buried alive, although this was subsequently undermined by a shot from the baby's point of view as the Peacock brothers filled in the grave. 'Home' was also the first of two *X-Files* episodes to be preceded by a viewer discretion warning for graphic content and, according to Jes Battis, the episode 'received public protest' (i.e. letters written to Fox) and is the only episode not to be screened in syndication (2010: 81). So while the content and style of the episode demonstrate the creative potential for horror on television, 'Home' also highlights many of the problems: restrictions imposed by the network concerned about alienating audiences and the potential for negative audience reaction suggest that this type of material is too scary and disturbing for TV. The relationship between horror and television is, therefore, fraught with tension and potential.

The aim of this book is to explore this tension and potential for TV horror. While the changing landscape of television has brought the genre to new prominence, horror has played a significant role in schedules since the television boom in the 1950s, with the broadcast of classic horror films and original programmes like *The Quatermass Experiment* and *The Twilight Zone* terrifying audiences by bringing the monstrous and the supernatural into the home. Given the inherently hybrid nature of television, the genre also crosses into most other genres from children's programming to comedy to procedural police dramas to reality TV. These factors, however, have not diluted the genre but rather have changed how we come to understand it on television, requiring us to rethink what we mean by horror within a televisual context.

While not giving a chronological history of the genre, the following chapters examine a broad selection of British and American TV movies, series and serials from the 1950s to the present as a means of unpacking the many approaches and formations of the genre for

television. TV horror exists as a nexus of often conflicting influences and factors that have shaped the genre and as such we approach the topic from a diverse range of approaches in order to explore the genre's inherent complexity. The following chapters address horror as a product of the broadcast industry (Chapter 1), but also as an element within TV's innate hybridity (Chapter 2). They will explore how television reshapes our understanding of such familiar approaches to the genre such as narrative (Chapter 3), adaptation (Chapter 4), authorship (Chapter 5), aesthetics (Chapter 7), and audiences (Chapter 10), as well as offering new insight into established horror sub-genres reworked for TV, such as the gothic (Chapter 6) and arthouse (Chapter 8). The chapters will examine how television is ideally suited to horror because it is still perceived as an object of horror (Chapter 9). This book therefore expands debates about what horror is assumed to be and what it can be, and about the nature of television and its relation to genres, to audiences and to the media industry.

As the chapters that follow demonstrate, rather than being incompatible with horror, television is, and has always been, a significant location for horror. It is at home, as a child watching TV that most fans first encounter the genre, whether that is by watching Count von Count on *Sesame Street*, *Rentaghost*, or late night double bills of '1960s Hammers or 1940s RKOs' (Dyson 1997: xiii). Jeremy Dyson, one of TV's *The League of Gentlemen*, explains the impact of seeing that first horror image on television as a child:

> As we played happily in the front room, an afternoon TV show was running a piece on Hallowe'en and broadcast a clip from Murnau's film showing the Count rising from the hold of the ship he had taken to Bremen. We froze in front of the television screen – the image of the Count alone enough to transfix us in absolute terror (1997: 4).

John Landis, director of *An American Werewolf in London*, similarly describes channel hopping between favourite Universal horror films as a child (*The American Nightmare* 2000). Feminist vampire scholar Nina Auerbach explains that the broadcast of '1930s horror movies on Saturday nights' in 1950s America, was a 'revelation to my best friend

and me', providing them with 'a secret talisman against a nice girl's life' (1997: 4). Watching horror on television in all of its variations has shaped the creators of and commentators on the genre (ourselves included) and this has led to new and exciting forms of televisual horror that continue to appear on our screens from year to year. Through television, horror begins at home as we all sit frozen in front of our television screens (or hidden behind the sofa), and it is to this tradition that we turn our attention.

1. The TV in TV Horror

Production and Broadcast Contexts

> Our *Doctor Who* is very, very, very Saturday night.
>
> (Russell T. Davies, quoted in Hills 2010 (a): 117)

By describing the reinvented *Doctor Who* as 'very, very, very Saturday night' showrunner Russell T. Davies acknowledges the context in which the show is produced, scheduled and marketed by the BBC as mainstream entertainment, despite its horror and science fiction roots. Similarly, in the commentary for the *Angel* episode 'Billy' (3.6), writers Tim Minear and Jeffrey Bell explain how they were forced to re-edit a scene in which Lilah Morgan, a series regular, is repeatedly struck by one of her colleagues, as it was deemed too violent. Rather than emphasize the repeated blows, the scene concludes with her being strangled. This decision is a good example of the censorship restrictions that affect the day-to-day production of a horror series. These contexts, however, are not fixed but fluid, evolving with changes in the television industry, and with social and political changes. This opening chapter, therefore, addresses how television production and broadcast contexts in the UK and the USA, including scheduling, censorship and the expansion of cable and satellite channels, have impacted upon the horror genre on television. Through these discussions we establish criteria for developing a new understanding of televisual horror.

TV scholars have tended to categorize television production history into three broad periods, sometimes referred to as TVI (roughly 1950–1975), TVII (1975–1990s) and TVIII (1990s–present). Shifts in industry and technology mean that television production takes on distinctive characteristics in the different eras, according to the opportunities and limitations of the period. How audiences consume television also changes according to these industrial and historical shifts (see, for example, Reeves, Rodgers and Epstein). In this chapter we aim to show how horror has been prominent on TV in the USA and the UK in all three eras, however it might be disguised or labelled. As Matt Hills notes, horror on TV is often 'generically nominated in ways that render horror relatively invisible', such as *Twin Peaks* being called postmodern drama (2005a: 112). The horror genre is frequently considered to be in bad taste or to be excessively violent and this is one reason there has been little consideration of TV horror, since TV itself is assumed to be a mainstream medium that cannot sustain the graphic nature (visual or thematic) of horror's subject matter. Moreover, it is assumed that the 'limitations' of the small screen mean TV does not have the capacity to render horror effectively (see Hills 2005a: 111). However, as Brigid Cherry points out, horror has never been a well-defined genre: 'It is not simply that there is a range of conventions that offers some degree of variation on a coherent, formulaic theme …, but that this genre is marked by a sheer diversity of conventions, plots and styles' (2009: 2). Thus it seems natural that horror has adapted itself to television conventions, plots and styles and thus proved highly successful.

TVI (1950–1975)

In this era, TV's restricted number of channels are seen to have a mainstream address. While some programming raised questions about what was appropriate to air on a broadcast medium this did not prevent experimentation with the genre as TV writers and producers sought to expand the limits of what television could do. In fact, as Lez Cooke points out, some writers welcomed the mainstream address of

TV, since it afforded an opportunity to reach a mass audience, unlike theatre (2003: 77). It is also a truism that during this era 'serious' social issues were often negotiated through fantasy genres such as science fiction and horror, with the single play drama a natural home for this kind of thought-provoking content. While an ethos of public service broadcasting informed UK television production on the BBC, more commercial concerns drive the US television industry. In both countries, the popularity of programming dealing with the uncanny and horror is apparent in shows from the seminal *Quatermass*, to anthology shows like *One Step Beyond*, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and *The Twilight Zone*, to daytime soap opera *Dark Shadows*, to gothic sitcoms like *The Addams Family*. Stephen Gallagher, screenwriter, director and novelist, observes that the 1950s and 1960s were 'awash' with science fiction and horror TV (quoted in Hills 2005a: 117). Some of these TV horror programmes were milestones in TV history (*Quatermass* was 'the earliest film to be adapted from television,' Pirie 2008: 23) or flagship productions, used to promote aspects of their channels and TV itself. Miles Booy points out that *Doctor Who* was 'consistently used by the BBC, just as historical serials were, to promote the imagination and skills of their design and costume departments' (2010: 189) and many people still associate the radiophonic workshop with *Doctor Who*.

As both Catherine Johnson and Helen Wheatley have acknowledged, this was a period of experimentation as writers and producers sought to overcome the technological limitations associated with both television production and broadcast, and explore the narrative and aesthetic possibilities of this new medium (Johnson 2005; Wheatley 2006). TV horror played a significant role in this development. Nigel Kneale, writer of the *Quatermass* serials, points out that the cameras used to make *The Quatermass Experiment* in 1953 were cumbersome, primitive equipment dating from 1936, which meant that 'you couldn't easily cut from one camera to another in those days, and cameras had great difficulty in following moving characters' (quoted in Newman and Petley 1998: 35). As Johnson notes, however, these seeming limitations were utilized by producer Rudolph Cartier to generate suspense and horror when he

chose to move the actor rather than the camera in a climactic end to the first episode. In this sequence the surviving astronaut from the first manned flight into space collapses and falls toward 'the camera so that his face momentarily fills the screen, revealing a mere glimpse of the terror in his expression before the image fades to a blur' (2005: 26). Similarly, in the climax of the serial, Quatermass confronts the giant alien creature in Westminster Abbey, an effect that could not be achieved in the same shot but was accomplished by inter-cutting between close-ups of the alien and Quatermass, overlaid by the sound of the 'alien's rustling tendrils' (Johnson: 26), binding the two images together in the same space, enhancing the visible with radio's ability to construct the illusion of space through sound.

The limitations of domestic technology also raised potential issues regarding the creation of horror. As Cartier explains, the size of the TV screen in the 1950s was between 17 and 21 inches, with only 405 lines of information (compared with over 1,080 lines of information in High Definition television), which meant that while closeups appeared life size, 'medium shots … show very little facial expression; and long shots can only be used to establish the backgrounds' (1958: 10). This led to the dominance of the close-up in television (Lury 2005: 28–29). These limitations of the image were once again manipulated to create a horror effect in the Kneale – Cartier collaborations by utilizing the close-up, not to reassure audiences with familiar faces and intimate moments but to unsettle, as when the astronaut falls toward the camera in *The Quatermass Experiment*. These close-ups were used most effectively in the Kneale/Cartier adaptation of George Orwell's *1984* (1954). As Cartier explains, Orwell's exploration of government surveillance through domestic TV screens gained additional impact by being adapted for and broadcast on television, to be viewed 'in the TV viewer's own home, where cold eyes stared from the small screen straight at him, casting into the viewers' heart the same chill that the characters in the play experienced whenever they heard [Big Brother's] voice coming from *their* "watching" T.V. screens' (1958: 10). The intimacy of the domestic television screen is here made threatening.

From these horror single plays and serials through to the horror anthology series of the 1960s and 70s, such as *Boris Karloff's Thriller, Mystery and Imagination* and *Rod Serling's Night Gallery*, TV horror continued to be affected by, while equally influencing, televisual technological developments as well as the increasing competition between channels or networks. For instance, Wheatley argues that one of the ways that British independent television channel ITV responded to increased competition with the BBC was by producing 'experimental and innovative' horror series like *Mystery and Imagination* 'which responded to the possibilities of television, showcased new production technologies, and challenged the predominance of naturalistic television drama in the 1960s' (2003: 80). While some of the gothic narratives of this series rely upon the suggestion of the supernatural, others, such as Patrick Dromgoole's adaptation *Dracula* (18 November 1968) engage in the spectacle of the supernatural through experimentation with developing optical and videographic special effects.

The Veil and *Boris Karloff's Thriller*, anthology horror series hosted by Karloff in which he introduced, and sometimes appeared in, stand-alone tales of the supernatural, highlight another context that influenced the development of TV horror in this period: the growing relationship between cinema and television. While it is often assumed that television was threatening competition for cinema by encouraging audiences to stay at home, in actuality the two media developed a productive, if cautious, symbiotic relationship. As television schedules expanded, the channels needed to fill hours of programming and Hollywood studios saw an opportunity to sell their back catalogue to television, thus developing a new strand of income. This led, as discussed in the introduction, to a rediscovery of classic horror films on television, making actors like Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, Lon Chaney Jr and Peter Lorre household names decades after the heyday of classic horror cinema of the 1930s and 40s. Karloff, Chaney and Lorre play themselves, for example, in the episode 'Lizard's Leg and Owlet's Wing' of the hit series *Route 66* (3 June 1962). In this episode, the actors meet up in a motel on the eponymous route to discuss an offer from a television network to

‘produce and star in the most terrifying stories ever seen on television’. While Karloff attempts to convince Lorre and Chaney that they should embrace a new modern form of horror, the others argue that playing traditional monsters will ‘guarantee our ratings’. The episode follows the actors as they perform a gallery of familiar monsters, including the Hunchback of Notre Dame, the Wolfman, the Mummy and Frankenstein’s monster, in order to ascertain whether these monsters are still scary. The episode concludes with the suggestion that the old ways still work … on television.

This influence from cinematic horror is apparent in both *The Veil* and *Boris Karloff’s Thriller*. These shows drew upon Karloff’s reputation as an iconic figure of classic gothic horror. While cinematic horror was moving into a new modern era, represented by Hitchcock’s *Psycho* and Romero’s *Night of the Living Dead*, TV horror was, through the influence of classic horror movies on television in this period, embracing gothic monsters. This approach to horror was potentially more appropriate to television given the restrictions upon what could be shown on network TV, at a time when censorship regulations for the cinema were relaxing. The influence of classic horror cinema is further felt in the gothic series *Dark Shadows*, the literary adaptations of classic gothic novels produced by Dan Curtis (*Dracula, Frankenstein, Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde)*, as well as those presented on a weekly basis in *Mystery and Imagination* (*Carmilla, Dracula, Uncle Silas*).

TVII (1975–1990s)

TVII is a period of transition between the network and the digital eras and, as such, often variously dated, though we have chosen the longest period between TVI and TVIII. Developments in technology changed the way people watched television. Recording technologies meant that watching live broadcast was no longer essential, and also allowed for archiving of favourite episodes or whole series. Having a remote control enabled easy channel surfing, suggesting that programming now had to work harder to retain attention. The

dominance of major channels also faced challenges both from pay-channels on cable and satellite and from new networks. In the late 1970s viewership of the 'big three' American networks was around 90 per cent (Staiger 2000: 170) but had dwindled to less than 60 per cent by 1991 (171), and by 2002 networks attracted less than 40 per cent of the audience (Hilmes quoted in Pearson 2005: 14).

These changes meant a widespread move away from the notion of *broad*casting of programming for the largest audience possible – and towards *narrow*casting: 'niche marketing of specific products to attract different segments of the audience at different times of day' (Nelson 1997: 236). Thus throughout the 1980s and 90s horror often emerges as a form of 'quality' television drama appealing to an upscale audience. Many view this period as enabling greater creativity and diversity. As network TV drew smaller audiences, 'TV programming gets better' opined Tom Shales, TV critic for *The Washington Post* (quoted in Thompson 1997: 44) and Robert J. Thompson argues that 'In 1981, shows started appearing that would never have made the lineup just a few years earlier' (1997: 35) because networks took risks to retain their audience. Several programmes held to have 'changed the face of television' during this period are TV horror (*Twin Peaks* and *The X-Files*) and Johnson argues that *The X-Files*' visual approach presented 'something different from the other networks (horror), in a new way (without "lots of blood")' as noted by Glen Morgan (2005: 101).

Sapphire and Steel, coming early in the TVII era (1979–1982), broke new ground, following the eponymous agents as they investigate disruptions of time. Sergio Angelini calls it an 'unusually thoughtful and troubling experiment in genre-splicing' (2010: 240) and writer P. J. Hammond speculates, 'I suppose it made a change from all the social realism dramas that had been around for so long' (1993, 1996). Originally intended as a children's drama, *Sapphire and Steel* stories evolved to contain dark elements, such as 'violent deaths and disfigurement, attempted suicides, monstrous shape-shifting creatures' and more (Angelini 2010: 239). Yet the show was broadcast early in the evening, usually at either 7 or 8pm, before the 9pm watershed (the time after which content considered unsuitable for

children may be safely aired). 'I like writing about things that disturb us,' Hammond admits, 'It's not the things you see, it's the things you don't see. It's the old Hitchcockian theory of fear' (quoted in Edgar 2007) and this suggestive, rather than graphic, approach may have allowed it to air in this time slot. Studio shooting predominated, yet the close-quarters nature of studio filming enhanced 'the menacing, claustrophobic nature of the stories,' according to Hammond (1993/1996). This is apparent not only in the eerie, deserted spaces of the large railway station set of Assignment Two, but also in Assignments One, Three and Four, set in an old house, an apartment in a high rise block and a shop with accommodation above respectively. Scenes on staircases or in hallways filled such everyday locations with a sense of the liminal and the uncanny, while the sets added to what Angelini calls the series' 'anti-naturalistic style' (2010: 240).

Sapphire and Steel may be studio-bound, authored drama in the British tradition, but Hammond's creation looks forward to developments in TVII horror.[2] The production company, ABC, invested part of a fairly large budget in stars to carry the show. Joanna Lumley and David McCallum were both recognizable faces from successful series such as *The New Avengers* and *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, yet their new characters were far from the popular action heroes of the network era. Sapphire and Steel remain mysterious, their purpose and origin never overtly explained, and their interactions with humans underscore their own uncanny, *in*human nature. By the end of Assignment Two, Hammond states, 'viewers were in a position to know exactly what Sapphire and Steel were capable of, and where they could sometimes fail' (1993, 1996). These characters are fallible and even unsympathetic. Steel, as his name suggests, is cold and has little patience with humans caught up in the assignments. At the end of Assignment Two he sacrifices a human to a strange force in a bargain to stop its activity. Viewers had got to know psychic investigator George Tully over eight episodes, yet after the being takes him both agents leave, apparently without regret for Tully's death. Ambivalent protagonists and moral grey areas like this

feature prominently in subsequent TVII series such as *The X-Files* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, culminating in the many TVIII monster protagonists discussed in Chapter 10.

Robin Nelson argues that the 'drift to series' in this period, 'marks a move from an authored, literary tradition of the playwright' (1997: 26), yet Roberta Pearson points out that in US television the writer-director or writer-producer was becoming the new 'author' of TV (see also Chapter 5). 'Writers, agents and UPN's target demographic of younger viewers were said to be attracted not just by *Buffy* but by Joss Whedon's high-profile public (might we even say star?) image', she argues of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*'s move from the *WB* network to UPN in 2001 (2005: 11). Certainly as Pearson, Johnson and others demonstrate, new US networks built their reputation and profile on key horror TV shows like *The X-Files* (on Fox) and *Buffy*. *Buffy*'s renegotiation of traditional gender roles (male and female), as well as its action and witty dialogue, was ideal for the WB's profile of 12–34-year-olds, especially its female viewers. *Buffy* and spin-off *Angel* 'helped to shape [WB and UPN]'s brand identity' (Pearson 2005: 18) and UPN paid over the odds to secure *Buffy* as part of its expansion from an established African – American and young male demographic, seeking enhanced performance and a promotional platform (Pearson 2005: 19) rather than the large audience share expected in the TVI era. Consequently both networks 'gave Whedon a high degree of creative freedom in acknowledgement of the show's centrality to their programming strategy' (Pearson 2005: 20). This freedom resulted in innovative episodes such as 'Hush' (the 'silent' episode of *Buffy*, 4.10), 'The Body' (a *Buffy* episode that eschews non-diegetic sound, 5.16), 'Once More With Feeling' (the *Buffy* 'musical', 6.7), and 'Smile Time' (an *Angel* episode where dark hero Angel is turned into a muppet, 5.14) many of which are fan favourites and the focus of Whedon scholarship.

One characteristic of TV drama in this era is increased genre hybridity, and shows like *Buffy* and *Angel* mixed horror with action, comedy and melodrama. This type of TV horror, however, led to new challenges in scheduling, especially in the UK. Annette Hill and Ian Calcutt offer a detailed examination of the scheduling of both shows,

which aired on two minority network channels (*Buffy* on BBC Two and *Angel* on Channel 4) and on one pay-channel (Sky One) in the UK. *Buffy*, like *Twin Peaks* before it, attracted a large audience for TV horror and was 'rarely out of the top three BBC Two programs' (Hill and Calcutt 2007: 64). However, both BBC Two and Channel 4 opted to air the shows in early evening or daytime slots, categorizing them as appealing to children or as family entertainment. Horror and violence led to episodes being edited for content deemed inappropriate for children, leading in turn to complaints from fans. Eventually, following the precedent of science fiction series *Babylon 5*, BBC Two opted to air a late night uncut rerun of *Buffy* after the early evening showing, and Channel 4 moved *Angel* to a late night slot, although by this time it had lost its audience. 'Imported cult TV,' Hill and Calcutt conclude, 'is generally treated better by pay television channels' because they 'have realized the significance of niche audiences in a multi-channel environment and because they rely on imported products as staple prime-time entertainment' (2007: 71). Sky One aired *Buffy* and *Angel* back-to-back in prime-time slots for their first UK run, and acquirers of subsequent TV horror followed this lead in scheduling.

Buffy and *Angel*, like *The X-Files*, established an audience partly through serial narrative. While adaptation and the mini-series continue to flourish, serial TV horror experienced an upsurge during this period (see Chapter 3). Long-form narrative tapped viewers who might organize their schedule around their favourite TV show. Thus, while serial drama has disadvantages for network broadcast (repeated episodes may not be shown in the 'correct' order, for example), VHS and DVD mean that viewers can purchase episodes and whole series to keep, opening up another revenue stream. Thus networks could afford to air niche TV horror shows, expecting revenue from multiple streams, not just from broadcast and advertising. In TVII, as Pearson observes, 'a programme's demographic profile counted for more than sheer numbers, with advertisers seeking the "right" viewers, those with disposable income and inclined to spend it' (2005: 15).

TVIII (1990s–PRESENT)

In this post-digital era, TV is moving beyond its reputation as mainstream, mass entertainment aimed at the lowest common denominator. As Charlotte Brunsdon observes, perceptions of TV have changed.

> This new, good television, in contrast to old, bad television is not broadcast network television, but television one either pays to see, or watches on DVD. Instead of being associated with housebound women, this new television is young, smart, and on the move, downloaded or purchased to watch at will (2010: 65).

More subscription channels open up what is acceptable on TV (see Chapter 10), and since such channels seek to outdo the competition by offering the 'best' or edgiest programming to the most desirable viewers, this era sees a boom in TV horror (*Dexter*, *True Blood*) and even more experimental art horror, such as the surreal *Carnivàle* discussed in Chapter 8. 'It is possible', suggests David Marc, 'that HBO launched *Carnivàle* as a probe to see just how far a premium cable series could push the aesthetic envelope' (2008: 101).

HBO in particular has had significant influence over the programming strategies used by expanding subscription channels. One of the first and still leading pay-TV channels, HBO is seen by many as providing the 'alternative to network offerings' and is 'regarded as the premier site for what has come to be called "quality television", and hailed critically as well as by audiences' (Leverette 2008: 1). Because it is a pay-channel – you cannot simply stumble upon HBO but must choose to subscribe – it is not bound by the same FCC regulations that affect other channels and does not need broad appeal but rather targets niche audiences interested in 'quality television'. As a result the channel is able to offer writers and series creators a great deal of autonomy and creative control, leading to series such as *The Sopranos, Sex and the City, The Wire, Six Feet Under* and *Curb Your Enthusiasm* being praised as stylistically, generically and narratively provocative and transgressive, often breaking social, cultural and televisual taboos. As Simon Brown

points out, HBO has, since the 1990s, 'push[ed] the boundaries of what was acceptable on television in terms of sex, violence, language and subject matter' (2010: 158). The channel, however, has rarely exploited this freedom for horror. HBO did produce the anthology series *Tales from the Crypt* (1989–1996) but this show was primarily aimed at horror's niche audience – a niche within HBO's niche audience – and never attained the same level of attention as the channel's flagship programmes. *Carnivàle*'s innovative art-cinema approach, as Marc suggests above, was linked to aesthetics and narrative ambiguity and the show was eventually cancelled after its second season.

The overall success of HBO, however, did, as Brown argues, influence a number of other pay channels, such as Showtime and AMC, in trying to attract loyal audiences with the promise of 'something more'. In the case of Showtime's *Masters of Horror* and *Dexter,* and AMC's *The Walking Dead,* this 'something more' is an overt engagement with horror conventions, graphic cinema-style body horror, and unsettling ambiguity. In many ways these channels out-HBO'd HBO with their willingness to push the boundaries of TV horror. For instance, initially *The Walking Dead*, based upon the zombie apocalypse graphic novel by Robert Kirkman, was pitched to NBC. According to Lane Brown, when executive producer and director Frank Darabont turned in the pilot script, 'They said "We can't do this! It's horrifying!"' (2010). In contrast, AMC welcomed the script and encouraged Darabont and producer Gale Anne Hurd to do the series their way, surprising them with what AMC were 'letting us get away with' on television (Darabont, 'The Making of *The Walking Dead'* 2011). As consulting producer and special effects make-up designer Greg Nicotero explains, AMC 'never once told us to tone things down … "Oh, you want to blow somebody's head off and have their brains splattered everywhere? No problem!"' (quoted in Lane Brown 2010). While the series focuses on the drama surrounding survivors of a zombie apocalypse, this is not at the expense of graphically depicted decaying bodies, zombies eating human flesh and humans exterminating zombies. This commitment to delivering the plot and spectacle typical of a cinematic zombie film in long-

running serial format is the 'something more' drawing audiences to the series. In a landmark deal, AMC sold the international rights to Season 1 to Fox International, enabling the show, according to AMC's Senior Vice President of Original Programming Joel Stillerman, 'to launch in 250 million households, 120 countries, over 30 languages, almost simultaneously' ('Convention Panel with Producers' 2011). This commitment paid off when the pilot episode, aired in the USA on 31 October 2010, earned 5.3 million viewers (Moore 2010). The success of channels like AMC and Showtime, at a time when most of HBO's critically acclaimed series such as *The Sopranos* and *Six Feet Under*, had come to their natural ends, put pressure on HBO. It is a sign of the changing place of horror on television screens that HBO chose to elevate *True Blood,* a series that re-imagines Southern gothic through graphic horror as discussed in Chapter 6, to be one of its new flagship programmes.

In the UK, horror appears on new youth channels such as E4 (*Dead Set*) or BBC Three (*Being Human*) seeking to distinguish the brand by offering original programming with bite through shows reinventing familiar TV formats (reality TV, the mini-series, the flatshare sitcom) or genre tropes (zombie, vampire, werewolf, ghost). TV horror also takes advantage of media convergence, offering multi-platform versions of popular shows. Horror, however, is not limited to niche channels. *Torchwood* began on BBC Three but with its growing popularity moved to BBC Two for Season 2, moved again to BBC One for Season 3 *Torchwood: Children of Earth,* and went global for Season 4, *Miracle Day*, co-produced and broadcast on BBC One and US channel Starz. Furthermore, the success of *Children of Earth,* discussed in Chapter 3, demonstrates that the genre can generate blockbuster, event television even in the era of timeshifting and downloading, just as the reinvented *Doctor Who* or mini-series *Marchlands* appear in prime-time, even family, slots on major UK channels.

Increasing advances in technology and effects and more focus on TV aesthetics also enhances TV horror as spectacle (*Masters of Horror*, *The Walking Dead*, *Pushing Daisies*). Comments about the visual 'limitations' of the small screen, what Hills describes as

'essentializing discussions of TV's poor image resolution and small image size' (2005a: 123) now seem largely unfounded given advances in widescreen, HD and 3D. The appeal of horror has long been associated with spectacle and, in a rather different fashion than science fiction or fantasy, with special effects, as noted in our discussion of TVI. While Jan Johnson-Smith observes 'the ever-increasing ability of television to offer plausible alternative realities enhanced by SFX and CGI spectacle' (2005: 153), Wheatley identifies TV horror's key challenge as 'the representation of the unrepresentable' (2006: 26). The 'unrepresentable' in the gothic horror Wheatley discusses is often the supernatural, yet horror also engages with graphic displays of gore, and many assume this is one of its primary functions. Barbara Creed argues that 'representations of the body in contemporary horror are primarily concerned with the materiality of the body and the visual display of its destruction' (1995: 128) and observes how in horror cinema the 'destruction of the body is emphasized with close-up shots of gore, blood, body parts, torsos, limbs, eyeballs, offal' (143) a feature transferred to the small screen in shows like *The Walking Dead*. However, horror fans and producers of horror often resist CGI effects, preferring the materiality of animatronics and prosthetics, demonstrated by the success of make-up experts like Nicotero. Director and writer of the six-part drama *Apparitions* (aired on BBC One and BBCHD in 2008), Joe Ahearne, sees CGI as lacking emotion, and discusses how acting and performance are vital in translating effects into something tangible for the viewer (Ahearne 2009). If TV horror is shot on HD, like *Apparitions* or BBC Three's *Being Human*, every detail 'has to be so perfect' as Marcus Whitney, *Being Human*'s make-up director notes ('Behind the Make Up' 2010).

Being Human, featuring a werewolf, a vampire and a ghost sharing a house, 'stepped up a pace' with the horror spectacle it offers viewers, according to Whitney from Season 2 ('Behind the Make Up'). Although Millennium FX won awards for their work with the werewolf prosthetics and animatronics for Season 1, both writer Toby Whithouse and producer Matt Bouch mention wanting to 're-examine' the show's werewolf transformations to make the finished

wolf 'much less like a man in a suit, to be honest,' admits Bouch ('Making the New Werewolf' 2010). The werewolf effects were revisited, and actor Paul Kasey who plays the wolf version of werewolf character George, describes the new werewolf as 'going for the scare factor' ('Making the New Werewolf'). Transformation scenes have always been key to werewolf movies, especially since the 1980s (*An American Werewolf in London*, *The Howling*, *The Company of Wolves*), yet films feature only one or two consciously show-stopping transformations. A TV series like *Being Human* includes ongoing werewolf characters who transform regularly and has to provide novelty as well as spectacle. 'There's only so many times you can show the same thing,' says Neill Gorton of Millenium FX, discussing how the series has to 'find new ways of transforming George' ('Making the New Werewolf'). During Seasons 2 and 3 this was achieved by new effects but also by introducing Nina, a female werewolf. Colin Teague, one of the Season 2 directors, describes how better prosthetics allow Nina's transformation to be filmed from chest to face all in one shot, rather than just showing one body part undergoing the change, as previously ('Making the New Werewolf'). This kind of attention to detail and constant innovation is seen by producers of TV horror as essential because they know audiences are savvy about effects, in television as well as in cinema. Making it as 'real' as possible is as important for TVIII series as continually refreshing the effects on show, given the enhanced viewing experience of HD television. Moreover, DVD features and ancillary materials often focus on the creation of effects (see Chapter 5), appealing to fans who take effects seriously as part of the horror experience.

As we have demonstrated, the horror genre has been a steady feature of television programming since the 1950s. How we understand and recognize horror has, however, evolved throughout this time in response to a broad spectrum of industrial and broadcast factors that have shaped the genre for television. The following chapters outline diverse ways of thinking about the horror genre on television in terms of narrative, style and content, and that diversity is

a product of the ever-changing industrial and broadcast contexts to which creators of TV horror must respond.

2. Mainstreaming Horror

When vampire Bill Compton arrives in the small-town of Bon Temps in HBO's *True Blood*, he explains that his intentions are to 'mainstream', i.e. to integrate among humans and live a 'normal' life. In this manner, the series recognizes the way in which horror has been increasingly mainstreamed in popular culture. In television, horror openly mingles on our screens with the staple genres of television programming. Matt Hills notes that scheduling, regulation and marketing cause problems in identifying horror on television and thus some types of TV horror are invisible because they are identified as something else. He uses gothic television as his main illustration (2005a). We extend this investigation of horror through a discussion of four key genres that have played a defining role within the history of television: police investigation series, hospital dramas, comedy and children's television, and demonstrate how these mainstream genres have repeatedly co-opted the conventions and imagery of horror. Even television advertising recognizes the lucrative potential of horror. In the 1970s, North American Saturday morning children's television regularly featured advertisements for kid's breakfast cereals Count Chocula and Frankenberry that drew upon familiar gothic imagery from classic Universal horror films, while in 2010 Burger King advertised their late night drive-thru with images of Jason and Freddy, the monstrous killers from the *Friday the 13th* and *Nightmare on Elm Street* franchises. In the 1990s, Ray Ban used vampire imagery to advertise their sunglasses, in which vampires

protect themselves from the sun by sporting Ray Bans. More recently, The Red Cross has drawn upon the popularity of TV horror to encourage teenagers to donate blood by tying in with *The Vampire Diaries,* utilizing the tag line 'Starve a vampire. Donate blood', while the Mini Convertible latched onto *True Blood* as part of their advertising campaign with the caption: 'Feel the Wind in Your Fangs'. This chapter, therefore, makes apparent that, rather than being incompatible with television, horror is a recurring feature across the broadcast landscape.

Investigative and hospital dramas, such as *ER, Prime Suspect,* and *CSI,* have pushed the boundaries of acceptability through increasingly graphic display of the body in torment. Links between these types of drama and TV horror can be seen in the way *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* and *Dexter*, for instance, adopt conventions from crime drama, while comedy-horror *Garth Marenghi's Darkplace* is set in a hospital, spoofing the medical drama as well as horror. Gothic comedies, from *The Addams Family* and *The Munsters* to *League of Gentlemen* and *Psychoville*, demonstrate how the classic traditions of the sitcom and the comedy sketch programme have been reworked to explore parallels between horror and comedy. Both comedy and horror make use of the grotesque and subversion, and exploring shows like these demonstrates how comedy can make horror 'safe' for television, while at the same time horror elements add a subversive edge to comedy. And despite debates about whether horror can, or should, be broadcast on a domestic medium that children may access, this section concludes by looking at the plethora of children's television that incorporates the imagery and narratives of classic horror, including the Count von Count from *Sesame Street, Rentaghost*, *Mona the Vampire, Frankenstein's Cat* and the ever-popular animated series *Scooby-Doo*.

INVESTIGATIVE AND HOSPITAL DRAMA

Hospital and investigative dramas, encompassing detective, police and procedural formats, are two genres that possess a long-standing

history within mainstream television programming. As a result their evolution is inextricably linked with the development of television drama, in particular the association of the medium with notions of realism. Both genres are necessarily set within a recognizable real world and, from *Dixon of Dock Green* to *The Wire*, or from *Dr Kildare* to *ER,* often deliberately present themselves as realistic and based upon real professional practices. Consequently, as genres they seem diametrically opposed to the more fantastic qualities of the horror genre. Yet, as discussed in Chapter 8, the hospital, due to its liminal status as a bridge between life and death, is often the locus of horror in series such as *The X-Files, Supernatural*, *Torchwood* and *The Fades*. Furthermore, with the relaxation of censorship in the transition from TVII to TVIII discussed in Chapter 1, both genres have increasingly incorporated graphic body horror, traditionally associated with the cinematic horror genre.

As Jason Jacobs has demonstrated, post-1990 hospital dramas such as *ER, Chicago Hope* and *Casualty* 'connected with and nurtured a popular fascination with decay, death and the destruction of the body', presenting what Jacobs describes as a 'morbid gaze' more traditionally associated with horror (2003: 1). Similarly, Deborah Jermyn argues that *Prime Suspect* was a landmark moment in TV crime drama, as well as television itself, due to its much commented upon inclusion of 'forensic sequences featuring graphic imagery and graphic detail' (2010: 5). As she points out, however, 'such moments of forensic realism, while groundbreaking in 1991, have since become de rigueur in TV crime drama' as evidenced by the phenomenally successful *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* franchise, as well as the plethora of procedurals that followed in *Prime Suspect*'s wake: *Silent Witness, NCIS, Bones,* and *Criminal Minds* all highlight the brutalization of the body both before and after death. The post-millennial hospital drama *House* merges the medical and procedural traditions, by using sophisticated special effects to 'take the viewer into the body to take an up-close look at the malady of the day from the inside out' (Bennett 2008).

These series often wallow in graphic depictions of what Pete Boss describes as the 'body in profuse disarray' and as a result push the

boundaries of what is acceptable in television drama (1986: 15). We argue, however, that they are able to do this because of their focus upon realism and their promise of authenticity, which moves their representation of the body beyond spectacle and lends these series an aura of respectability. For instance, Jacobs argues that the medical drama's focus upon the body, often brutally treated and invaded by medical staff, is justified by the fact that it is 'directed to positive healing rather than violent destruction', while in the police procedural it is in the service of solving a crime (2003: 69). Ryan Murphy, creator of *Nip/Tuck*, rationalizes the show's depiction of plastic surgery by claiming that the show is a 'brutal hour look[ing] at the reasons people hate themselves' (quoted in Lyons 2007: 4). Yet these series equally exploit the spectacle of body horror for aesthetic purposes, as the camera lingers on the body up close and in graphic detail.

For instance, the opening sequence of each episode of *Bones* not only highlights the discovery of the body but emphasizes its often decaying or dilapidated condition. In keeping with horror genre conventions, the producers become increasingly creative with the conditions of the bodies as the show progresses, and consequently the series has become more graphic, a tradition taken to even greater extremes in *Pushing Daisies*, discussed in Chapter 7. In 'The Cinderella in the Cardboard' (*Bones* 4.20) a body is discovered that has been processed through a baling machine and ends up sandwiched between pieces of recycled cardboard. When the cardboard is removed, the body is revealed as a flattened crimson mass of flesh, blood and bone. The sequence moves from high angle long shot to a close-up tracking past the crushed face and skull, emphasizing details before returning to a high angle shot. Following this initial discovery, the episode repeatedly returns to close-ups of the body while it is being examined. Unlike other episodes where the flesh is quickly stripped off the bones for examination, this episode wallows in the excesses of the body in disarray. The grotesque skeletal frame is highly reminiscent of images of the transformed and mutating bodies created by Rob Bottin for *The Thing*.

These sequences, and many others like them, however, are not necessarily designed to scare or unsettle the audience. In fact, *Bones* uses a great deal of comedy in order to defuse the horror, as when one of the interns compares sliding the remains off the cardboard to sliding a pizza out of a pizza oven, ready to serve (see Fig. 2.1 overleaf). Graphic display is designed to provoke disgust but also to highlight a detached scientific way of looking at the dead, which is further emphasized through this use of humour. While Yvonne Tasker argues that forensic series often make 'widespread use of macabre, Gothic imagery – particularly the low key lighting and expressionist aesthetic associated with gothic film' (2011), these series are not constructed as horror. They draw upon a language of horror to highlight the often diabolical qualities of serial killers, such as the Grave Digger in *Bones* who buries her victims alive, or to highlight the monstrousness of the crime through graphic depiction of what was done to the victim, such as the pig-farmer killers in *Criminal Minds* who experiment on their victims before dismembering them and feeding the body parts to their pigs in 'To Hell … and Back Parts 1 & 2' (4.25–26). While this episode features an unsettling conclusion with no bodies remaining as witness to the crimes – only 89 pairs of abandoned shoes – the abject body in the forensic series is usually openly on display but rendered safe through the discourses of law and science that dominate these shows (Weissmann 2007). The level of graphic detail used during the initial examination in *CSI* and *Bones* presents the body as witness, telling the story of what was perpetrated against the victim, and later, through autopsies and further testing, these series present the body as evidence. As Weissmann explains, the body 'is now also much cleaner than before: it has been washed of its excess gore [in the case of *Bones* it is stripped of flesh] and the mutilations are now explained in their relation to the crime. Thus, the body is here not only stripped of its power as a conversational partner, but it is also stripped of its ability to disrupt through its abject qualities. The body in the autopsy, therefore, seems safe and mastered' (2007: 130).

2.1 ‘Cinderella in the Cardboard’ *Bones* (4.20)

Of course, it is not simply through the graphic representation of the body that these genres have co-opted conventions of horror. As we discuss in Chapter 8, Lars von Trier’s *Riget* [*Kingdom*] integrates the hospital drama with the paranormal, positioning the hospital as an uncanny space haunted by spirits. In fact, as Heather Nunn and Anita Biressi have pointed out, ‘the ghost or spirit or haunting presence’, traditionally associated with gothic horror, ‘enjoys an observable centrality in contemporary television’ (forthcoming). In addition to these hospital dramas, the presence of the spirit world is, according to Nunn and Biressi, often integrated ‘within a rationalist detective – investigative framework’ in series such as *The X-Files, Sea of Souls*, *Afterlife*, *Shades, Medium*, and *Ghost Whisperer*. Tasker argues that this is not surprising as ‘crime television has a long-standing relationship to both the gothic and the paranormal’ due to their shared preoccupation with murder, death and evil. This is made manifest in ‘psychic crime or mystery shows’ like *Medium* and *Ghost Whisper*er ‘in which visions and/or communication with the dead initiate and are central to the development of the investigative plot’ (2011). These series construct a hybrid investigation/horror format which utilizes conventions of horror and the fantastic to convey the intrusion of the supernatural into the natural world, and this is often presented in a way that is designed to unsettle the audience as in psychic Allison DuBois’ visionary nightmares in *Medium*. The dominance of the

investigation format in which these psychic detectives use messages from 'the other side' to solve earthly crimes, however, forces the supernatural to yield to mortal laws when the crimes are resolved and criminals brought to justice. In so doing, like the body in *CSI,* the supernatural is rendered safe.

'ALL TOGETHER OOKY': COMEDY AND HORROR

There is a long tradition of comedy-horror and horror-comedy on TV, in cinema and other fictions. Both *The Addams Family* and *The Munsters* were part of a wave of 'MagiComs' in the network era (including *Bewitched* and *I Dream of Jeannie*), successfully bringing together the family sitcom and horror iconography. John Astin (Gomez Addams), describes David Levy developing *The Addams Family* from Charles Addams' cartoon drawings as '*Father Knows Best* with different people' ('The Addams Family Portrait'). Thus the contemporaneous suburban family sitcom is given a twist with the addition, as Helen Wheatley notes, of visual references to horror films of the 1930s and 40s (2006: 126). Herman Munster replicates the costume and make-up worn by Boris Karloff's monster in the Universal *Frankenstein* films, his werewolf son Eddie has a stuffed toy resembling Lon Chaney Jr's wolfman, while the Addams family live in a 'creepy' and 'kooky' gothic mansion (as the title song has it). However, these families are not happily distanced in period horror but living just down the street right now proving, as Wheatley observes, that there is 'no disconnection between the images and narratives of the gothic and the scenes and spaces of everyday life in North America' (2006: 127).

While other sitcoms of the time idealize American family life, both gothic sitcoms seek to subvert suburban conformity. Each is built on the premise that the title family believe themselves to be normal, while others see them as strange and 'all together ooky' (*The Addams Family* title song). Each also features episodes where family members become normal, causing consternation among their loved ones. Thus, in 'Just Another Pretty Face' (2.17) Herman Munster is

'disfigured' by an experiment that leaves him looking like a normal person (actor Fred Gwynne without makeup), while 'Amnesia in the Addams Family' (1.22) sees Gomez temporarily lose his memory along with his 'ookiness'. In 'Morticia and the Psychiatrist' (1.2) Gomez and Morticia Addams consult an expert about their son Pugsley's unnatural behaviour when he starts wearing a Boy Scout uniform and playing with a 'P-U-P-P-Y' rather than his beloved octopus Aristotle. Dr Black tells them that 'all parents have the same problems: weird clothes and strange pets, all bidding for more attention' and eventually Pugsley returns to 'normal'. *The Munsters* episodes 'Family Portrait' (1.13) and 'A Visit from the Teacher' (2.32) also play on the notion that the family is like any other. In the former, *Event* magazine has chosen the Munsters as the average American family but Grandpa takes umbrage at being labelled average, and disappears. In the latter, the final episode of the show, Eddie presents a class paper at school titled, 'My Parents: An Average American Family', leading to an investigation of his claims via a home visit. Laura Morowitz concludes that 'Eddie's paper encapsulated the major theme of the series: the constant oscillation between the Munster's desire to fit in and their ultimate inability to do so' (2007: 35).

Of course, despite their strange appearance, both the upscale Addams and the blue collar Munsters are close families, with parents supporting and nurturing their children, and husbands and wives demonstrating enduring marital love. As Wheatley notes, many viewers remember Morticia Addams and Lily Munster as sexual characters (2006: 142), and an especial charm of *The Addams Family* is the display of physical attraction between Morticia and Gomez, unusual for TV sitcom at that time. Despite their sexualization, however, both Morticia and Lily are good housewives and Morticia is often seen knitting garments as gifts for family members, or watering her (albeit carnivorous) houseplants. These female leads offer something exciting and dangerous drawn from gothic horror but still fit the domestic role of sitcom housewife, and the shows share consensus ideals of marriage and family.

Morowitz notes that both shows 'draw on the grotesque as a powerful tool for critiquing the notion of "normalcy"' (2007: 41). Representing non-normative bodies is a key example here, with many characters such as Thing (a disembodied hand), uncle Fester (who can power light bulbs by putting them in his mouth) or Cousin Itt (whose diminutive body is entirely masked by long hair) from *The Addams Family*, and Eddie Munster from *The Munsters*, displaying physical features that emphasize their difference. In a horror-inflected sitcom these are taken as normal, so that when Eddie is asked by his father if he has washed before receiving the teachers at home in 'A Visit from the Teacher,' he replies that he has brushed his fangs and washed behind his points. The physical differences of the bodies Morticia's frequent knitted creations are intended for are evident when she holds them up for approval. Naturally, these moments are played for laughs, but nevertheless non-normative bodies are presented as unremarkable within these loving families.

The success of these two shows inspired the appearance of a similarly 'creepy' family, the Gruesomes (Weirdly, Creepella and son Goblin or Gobby for short) on animated sitcom *The Flintstones*, debuting in 1964, the same year *The Addams Family* and *Munsters* began. Like the Addams and the Munsters, Gobby has strange taste in pets and the Gruesome home is full of surprises for the unwary. Playing on the popularity of ghoulish hosts on TV at the time, the Gruesomes are actually TV celebrities (see also *The Munsters* episode 'Zombo' (2.22) where Eddie appears on the Zombo show). This neatly translates their strangeness into the distinctive appearance necessary to attract viewers' attention and stand out from more conventional TV fare, just as the spooky sitcoms were doing.

The League of Gentlemen and *Psychoville*, discussed in more detail in Chapter 7, as well as *The Mighty Boosh* also adapt familiar comic forms to produce new and innovative TV horror. *The League of Gentlemen* and *The Mighty Boosh* began as stage shows, and even on radio and eventually television the sketch show format is discernible in both programmes. This blends with elements from the sitcom, including focus on family and workplace relationships,

specific comic situations and characters with exaggerated distinguishing features and catchphrases – such as *Mighty Boosh* Vince Noir's obsession with his perfectly coiffed hair and his increasingly outlandish Mod/Goth clothes and make-up. Leon Hunt comments that *The League of Gentlemen* follows the sitcom convention whereby characters are confined 'by [their] own limitations' as well as their situation (2008: 7), and enhances this with a confined, small-town setting (58). The creators infuse this mix with their own obsession with horror through intertextual references to horror films and TV, and through their construction of a gallery of grotesque characters. As the show develops over three seasons, a Christmas special and a spin-off movie, serial narrative becomes more prominent but elements of the sitcom and sketch show are never completely eradicated. The later venture, *Pyschoville*, created by two of the four-strong team who developed *The League of Gentlemen*, retains sitcom-type features but introduces thriller and mystery elements alongside a penchant for the macabre.

The Mighty Boosh is similarly constructed around situational narratives – albeit comically surreal ones – as characters Vince Noir and Howard Moon face different obstacles; from a journey to monkey hell led by a taxi-driving, cockney-speaking skeletal Grim Reaper ('Bolo' 1.3) to Vince and Howard accidentally unleashing upon the world a monstrous demon, the Nanatoo, which takes the form of a little old lady who uses her knitting needles as a violent weapon ('Nanageddon' 2.3). In contrast to *The League* and *Psychoville*, *The Mighty Boosh* emphasizes the ridiculousness of horror conventions by intermixing dramatic horror moments, like Vince and Howard's discovery of mutant animals, with comic musical numbers such as 'We are the Mutant Race' ('Mutants' 1.2). Furthermore, like *Garth Marenghi*, *The Mighty Boosh* deliberately opts for a low budget horror aesthetic, supposedly spending the majority of the show's budget on Vince's hair ('Bolo'), calling to mind a long tradition of cult trash horror.

Appearing on minority channel BBC Two rather than the flagship BBC One might suggest that *The League of Gentlemen* and *Pyschoville* are not exactly mainstream. Similarly, Catherine Spooner

describes *The Mighty Boosh,* broadcast on the even more niche BBC Three, as an example of a cult and sub-cultural comedy (2011). Despite their more niche audiences, however, the use of comedy brings their horror elements to a broader audience than would potentially be reached by horror alone. All three shows were successes for these channels and Hunt argues that on television alternative comedy almost forms a subcategory of quality television (2008: 19) by virtue of its perceived edginess and originality. *The League* and *Psychoville* undoubtedly, as Hunt notes (2008: 25), test the boundaries of TV by pushing comedy to its darkest extreme, while *The Mighty Boosh* explores the surreal and comic edges of television horror.

'SHOW US YOUR FANGS!': CHILDREN'S TELEVISION

> 'I would like you to put on more cartoons about witches and monsters. And call it the spooky channel'
>
> (Eight-year-old girl respondent quoted in Messenger-Davies 2001c: 37)

While children's television might seem the least expected arena for TV horror, given the discourses of protection and harm that surround broadcasting for younger viewers, the genre has been established for many years because children's television offers a space of and for the imagination, lending itself to fantasy genres. The title song for animated series *Mona the Vampire* explains that its protagonist Mona Parker is 'a nice normal girl in an ordinary world' but she prefers to dress as a vampire and see the supernatural instead: 'show us your fangs!' invites the song.

Máire Messenger-Davies' study of children's responses to kids' TV found that 'Many children … expressed enthusiasm for the horror genre and enjoyment in scary programmes' (2001c: 164), as the eight-year-old quoted above attests, and children's television demonstrates the pervasiveness of horror icons and tropes. The vampire appears as Count von Count in *Sesame Street* (debuting in 1972), as an

animated vegetarian duck in *DangerMouse* and spin-off *Count Duckula*, and as a girl playing dress up in *Mona the Vampire*. The animation *Frankenstein's Cat* renegotiates another major horror icon. While necessarily lacking the graphic sex and violence that might be found in HBO's adult-oriented *True Blood*, these shows still reinvent familiar horror tropes for a new audience. Alison Peirse outlines how different periods of British TV fantasy for children take different approaches according to dominant trends, variously adapting and exploiting nostalgia, period, and realism (2010b). We argue that children's TV horror also follows trends in the genre. For instance, a chilling drama like *Children of the Stones* reworks British folk horror cinema like *The Wicker Man*, and several of our examples share similarities with more adult TV horror.

Children's fantasy TV in general enacts, as Peirse observes, 'the necessary transition between the world of the everyday, and the fantastic spaces of children's adventure' (2010b: 110) and Messenger-Davies notes that kids' drama 'is less bound by the constraints of realism than adults': magic, fantasy, fairytale and slapstick humour are staple ingredients' (2001a: 97). Most children's TV horror plays with realism and fantasy. *Scooby-Doo* neatly demonstrates Tsetvan Todorov's theory of the fantastic, whereby the narrative hesitates weekly between supernatural and rational explanations of its spooky goings on, only to choose the rational: the supernatural is a hoax perpetrated by ordinary people, who would have gotten away with it too, if it weren't for those meddling kids (as the regular punchline goes). *Mona the Vampire* constantly shifts between the real world and Mona's imaginary world where her vampire self defeats supernatural forces. Alternatively, Peirse notes how the reinvigoration of social realism and populism in British television during the early 1990s situates dramas like *Dark Season* and *Century Falls* in the real world, describing the former as 'trad[ing] in the ordinariness of everyday existence' to counterpoint and ground its dark horror elements (2010b: 114).

The fantasy space of children's TV horror also allows for renegotiation of identity. TV shows from *Mona* up to a teen drama like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* enact a generational role reversal, with kids

becoming responsible heroes and adults usually remaining oblivious to any danger. In this way, as Messenger-Davies notes, they are characterized by 'carnivalesque subversion of the respectabilities of adult authority' (2001a: 97). Moreover, since drama is structured around conflict, children's horror fits the pattern of both conflict resolution (child heroes solve the problem) and coming-of-age story (child protagonists learn responsibility).

Children's TV horror also renegotiates the notion that horror is traditionally male-oriented. Velma from *Scooby-Doo*, Mona, and Lottie from *Frankenstein's Cat* are just a few of many female protagonists. Each week, Lottie resists the denigration of her male classmates, who comprise the rest of the child population of village Oddsburg, and always gets the better of them. Their attitude to 'girls' and constant recourse to the *Big Boy's Book of Big Boy Stuff* is ridiculed, and the biggest and strongest (and gentlest) of the boys, Bigtop, is even shown to enjoy some 'girly' stuff like fairy parties ('Birthdaze') or little dogs ('Tricky Spot'). This situation is reversed for the titular cat, Nine (made from parts of nine different cats), as the other animals in Dr Frankenstein's castle are all female and often play mean tricks on him. Nine and Lottie's strong friendship helps them endure such gender-based teasing.

Other children's horror TV appears to be less about identity and more about the fun to be had from horror and the supernatural. A long-running series like *Rentaghost* exemplifies the carnivalesque, a staple of children's TV and of horror, presenting a world turned upside down where ghosts are normal and those who do not believe in them are strange. The ghosts' presentation is comically camp, with emphasis on misunderstandings between archaic and modern language (often causing spells to backfire) or slapstick, but also including surreal elements like pantomime horse, Dobbin (always presented as a horse and never as two people inside a costume). The eponymous premise of the show – that the ghosts hire out their services – immediately raises the issue of how they integrate into 'normal' society, a theme also taken up by *True Blood* or *Being Human*. *Rentaghost*'s chaotic physical comedy and bizarre conjunctions of the mundane and the supernatural is reminiscent of

The Addams Family's more manic episodes and performances, but also follows a trend in darker TV horror-comedy such as *The League of Gentlemen*.

Frankenstein's Cat features grotesque and non-normative bodies but here angled to the kind of 'gross' comedy children enjoy. Nine is an obvious example, though a similarly patched-together chicken, dog and hamster, and a whole basement full of rejects or 'Wrong Things' live in the castle. Episodes feature a spot that comes alive and squirts pus on everyone ('Tricky Spot'), or a bevy of disembodied brains that escape the castle and fly around the village looking for knowledge to absorb ('Brains'). While the horror elements of these scenarios might be diluted via animation and comedy, the show delights in unruly, grotesque physicality in the same way as horror aimed at older audiences such as *Psychoville* (see Chapter 7). *Frankenstein's Cat* also self-consciously references its horror genre roots, as when Dr Frankenstein crows that 'This invention will guarantee me the front cover of *Mad Doctor Quarterly*!' ('Dust Up') or when a monster-hunting character called Van Halen (mixing an obvious reference to Dracula's nemesis Van Helsing with the name of rock band Van Halen) makes his first appearance in 'Monster Man'. Such parodic references serve as reminders that children's TV is not just watched by children: it often includes jokes for parents and carers. Messenger-Davies notes that *Sesame Street* also operates 'with (as its witty allusions to American popular and high culture make clear) an eye to accompanying older audiences' (2001b: 100). These allusions include a *True Blood* parody, *True Mud*, complete with a Digital Kitchen-style opening credit sequence, and a sketch where the Count watches *Six Feet Under* on television, both HBO shows aimed at adults.

The series aspect of such kid's shows balances uncanny horror elements with familiar repetition. *Scooby-Doo* and *Mona* have reassuring episode endings and regular narrative features provide familiar structure, like the music montage chase scene mid way through an episode of *What's New, Scooby-Doo?* At times this too is subverted, as in the straight-to-video film *Scooby-Doo and the Witch's Ghost*, which starts with the usual ending – the kids catch the

killer, who delivers the expected punchline – unmasks the hoax haunting around halfway, only to have a real witch's ghost take up the rest of the story. This subversion occurs outside broadcast TV, though *Scooby-Doo and the Witch's Ghost* relies on viewer familiarity with the episodic TV format to effect its twist. Other series have less resolution, with both *Frankenstein's Cat* and *Rentaghost* teetering on the brink of returning to carnivalesque chaos as each episode closes.

Iconography is also familiar: the Count von Count is often shown on *Sesame Street* playing the organ with bats flying around him, and Count von Count and Count Duckula both wear the classic vampire opera cloak and evening dress. While repetition arguably dulls the 'horror' of such iconography, it also allows for comedy through variation, as when the Count introduces a song about counting backwards in Spanish saying, 'perhaps you do not recognize me in this outfit' (a brightly coloured fiesta shirt with ruffled sleeves). A similar gag is used several times in vampire TV like *Buffy* or *Angel* with vampires Angel and Spike. Similarly, *What's New, Scooby-Doo*'s 'Big Scare in the Big Easy' invokes the kind of Southern gothic examined in Chapter 6, including graveyards, New Orleans local colour, family troubles, Civil War ghosts and a mysterious family portrait, but contrasts such familiar gothic elements with commercial Ghost Tours, demonstrating that it is not only children's TV that repackages horror for the mainstream.

As television images from adverts to sitcoms, from hospital drama to kids' cartoons prove, horror long ago entered the mainstream. Its iconography and conventions are a key part of popular culture and it appears as frequently on mainstream television as in cult shows on niche channels. As the next chapter demonstrates, however, the continued presence of the horror genre on television has led to a televisual metamorphosis as TV creators reshape and restructure horror narratives to suit this distinct broadcast media.

3. Shaping Horror

From Single Play to Serial Drama

For zombie film fans, the TV series *The Walking Dead* is satisfying viewing as it amalgamates familiar conventions established by now classic films such as *Night of the Living Dead, Dawn of the Dead* and *28 Days Later*. Its first six episodes deliver a series of recognizable set pieces: a man wakes up in a hospital to find it, and the surrounding town, abandoned while bodies decay in the street (*à la 28 Days Later*); a seemingly innocuous man stumbling around in the background of the image is revealed to be the walking dead (*Night of the Living Dead*); a group is trapped in a department store surrounded by the living dead (*Dawn of the Dead*); racial tension erupts between the human survivors (*Night of the Living Dead*); a character conceals that he has been bitten and slowly becomes infected (*Land of the Dead*); two survivors smother themselves in zombie blood in order to walk among the undead unnoticed (*Shaun of the Dead*); a scientist trapped alone in his facility tries to find a cure to the infection (*I Am Legend*). What distinguishes *The Walking Dead* from the films it cites is its serial narrative. While zombie films often become franchises, with *Night of the Living Dead, 28 Days Later* and *Resident Evil* all spawning sequels following stages of the zombie apocalypse, each film is a self-contained narrative, tracking a group struggling to survive.[3] But these franchises demonstrate the potential within the zombie narrative for seriality. The zombie apocalypse is not

a sudden cataclysmic event but a gradually dispersing infection, and even once it has spread globally, the remainder of humanity continue to fight for survival. It is by its very nature an ongoing apocalypse, making it ideal for serial television.

The Walking Dead, adapted from the comic book series, expands and develops familiar generic set pieces into significant, dramatic and horrific events. Sometimes these set pieces operate as the primary narrative within individual episodes, as when it is revealed that Jim has been bitten by a zombie and the group attempt to help him ('Wildfire' 1.5). In other cases the generic conventions extend across episodes forming mini-arc narratives, as when recurring character Amy is unexpectedly attacked by zombies ('Vatos' 1.4). 'Vatos' ends with her death in the arms of her older sister Andrea. The next episode, 'Wildfire', begins as the survivors destroy zombie bodies and bury their own dead, while Andrea cradles her sister's body. Tension builds as everyone anticipates Amy's inevitable revival. When Amy's eyes eventually blink open, she stares up in confusion, and then reaches out to Andrea. Andrea, still holding her sister, apologizes for not being there when she was young but assures her, 'I'm here now Amy – I'm here now … I love you', then shoots her in the head. The cinematic equivalent of this sequence usually happens suddenly as infection manifests instantaneously, or ends with the living relative, too distraught to fight back, being killed by their loved one. In either case the sequence is played for shock (see *Night of the Living Dead* or *28 Days Later*). Here the trope extends across two episodes, building anticipation of Amy's revival and its emotional impact upon Andrea. The audience is drawn into Andrea's emotional situation, mirrored in the response of the other characters as they watch this strangely intimate moment between the sisters. Horror emerges from the fact that Andrea is forced to shoot her sister, effectively watching her die a second time, but also from the disturbing contrast between Andrea's tender care and the scene's violent conclusion. Glen Creeber argues that the serial nature of television can 'capture audience's involvement in a way unequalled by few contemporary media' (2004: 4) and this sequence demonstrates the great potential for constructing decidedly televisual horror.

This chapter, therefore, considers how televisuality reshapes the horror narrative. Horror in cinema is largely restricted to the single drama narrative. Occasional forays into the portmanteau subgenre with films such as *Dead of Night* and *Doctor Terror's House of Horror* are a comparatively niche approach. There is a strong propensity toward producing sequels – *Dracula's Daughter, Brides of Dracula, Halloween, Friday the 13th* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* franchises – but these tend to be a repetition of formula rather than serial narrative. Television, however, has a history of diverse approaches to telling horror stories. TV horror can take the form of the single play (or made-for-TV movie) such as Dan Curtis's *The Curse of the Black Widow* or Nigel Kneale's *The Stone Tape* – generally a 90-minute format modelled on the cinematic feature – or a mini-series or serial which tells one continuous story over a number of episodes, concluding in the final instalment. This approach is seen in the BBC *Quatermass* serials of the 1950s as well as the television work of Stephen King, including adaptations of his novels *Salem's Lot* and *The Shining*, and original TV work like *Storm of the Century* (discussed in Chapter 4).

A variation of the made-for-TV movie is the portmanteau film such as Dan Curtis's *Trilogy of Terror* or Mark Gatiss' *Crooked House* – a cinematic tradition recreated for television. The portmanteau format usually links two or three individual scary stories by a wraparound narrative. This approach was itself inspired by horror comics where each issue contained a selection of gruesome stories. It also suggests the creepy atmosphere of 'telling ghost stories', a characteristic evoked in *The Simpsons* annual Halloween 'Treehouse of Horror' portmanteau episodes which are sometimes framed by the family telling scary stories. Gatiss' *Crooked House* offers an interesting televisual variation of this format as it was broadcast in three parts on 22–23 December 2008 as stand-alone stories, and then later broadcast as a portmanteau film on 27 December 2008.[4]

The anthology series is another televisual variation on the portmanteau film, made up of 'single stories that are connected by a related theme, setting or set of characters' (Creeber 2004: 8). In the

case of TV horror the episodes are linked together by the strange, macabre and gruesome, and an iconic host like Boris Karloff or Rod Serling sometimes invites audiences into their dark worlds. The anthology series is an episodic format generally broadcast weekly, but each episode stands alone, much like short stories (which often serve as source material, as discussed in Chapter 3). In contrast, the series format of a show like *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* features 'continuous stories (usually involving the same characters and settings) which consist of self-contained episodes possessing their own individual conclusions' (Creeber 2004: 8). In *Kolchak*, the title character is a journalist who investigates supernatural phenomena, facing and destroying a different monster each week. Finally, the serialized format (or soap opera) is best exemplified by *Dark Shadows,* a daytime soap featuring a continuous story about supernatural events and characters in the small-town of Collinsport, Maine. This is the most extreme form of serial narrative. In keeping with developments within the contemporary broadcast landscape, recent TV horror has increasingly merged the series and serial format. As Creeber argues, contemporary TV drama, 'frequently employs complex forms of "flexi-narrative", introducing intricate and sophisticated layers of plot and subplot narrative levels which gradually enhance character and narrative density beyond the scope of the single "closed narrative"' (2004: 15). As such, shows like *The X-Files, Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and *Supernatural* integrate the monster-of-the-week narrative within broader narrative arcs which can extend across one season or across an entire show's run.

Each of these narrative formats draws upon different storytelling techniques creating a unique rhythm for horror, distinct to television. Consequently, each offers a different approach to constructing horror.

Gregory Waller argues that made-for-TV horror, particularly when the format was at its peak on 1970s/80s American television, proved conservative in its approach to the genre. He suggests that in TV movies the horror is far more localized, implying that the threat displayed does not impact upon society at large, and at the story's end, the monster is destroyed and normality is restored (1987: 150). By this argument the TV horror movie has more in common with what

Andrew Tudor describes as 'secure horror' of the classic era that 'predominantly assume[s] a secure world which can be protected against all manner of threats' (1995: 35). Tudor's argument is based upon a narrative formula in which

> the story opens by establishing an apparently stable situation. Then, this 'normality' is interrupted by a destabilizing influence, a monster, say, or supernatural force. And finally, after an extended middle period in which the monster goes on the rampage, order (of some kind) is restored. (34)

An examination of the range of narrative formats available to TV horror, however, demonstrates that the above formula is more in keeping with cinema. Many television formats lend themselves to a lack of resolution, suggesting that the monstrous continues and 'normality is not restored', in the tradition of Tudor's 'paranoid horror' (1995: 35). TV horror, therefore, often presents a dystopian vision that lacks the reassurance commonly associated with television. Through case studies of the TV movie and mini-series, the portmanteau film and the anthology series, and finally series and serial narrative, this chapter explores how these decidedly televisual formats and narratives construct a new shape for TV horror.

MADE-FOR-TV MONSTERS: THE SINGLE PLAY AND MINI-SERIES

The made-for-TV movie, or single play, is a production mode that saw its heyday in the 1960s and 1970s. In the USA it developed in 1968 with ABC's *Movie of the Week*, while in Britain it developed much earlier with ITV's *Armchair Theatre* in 1956. In both cases, by the mid 1980s the made-for-TV movie was no longer a major television format, replaced, according to Creeber, by more televisual forms (2004: 2).

The popularity of the TV movie in the 1970s, however, led to the rise of the made-for-TV horror movie which experienced its own golden age, with 'over 100 made-for-television horror movies … premiered on prime-time [American] network television since 1968'

(Waller 1987: 146). These films include adaptations of gothic novels such as *Count Dracula* (1977), *Frankenstein* (1973) and *The Turn of the Screw* (1974), or original contemporary horror such as *Fear No Evil* (1969), *Duel* (1971) and *Gargoyles* (1972). John Kenneth Muir argues that in this period television became increasingly graphic and that the 'turn toward darkness' in TV horror represented, as with cinematic horror, 'a shift in national mood due, at least in part, to the shocking and graphic news footage coming back from the Vietnam War. It was as if for the first time Americans were aware of a darker world, and television reflected that shift in perspective' (2001: 2).

The format of the TV horror movie mimics its cinematic counterpart. TV movies, like feature films, generally involve a single narrative but are usually lower budget and have a shorter production schedule. Also, in certain contexts (i.e. American network television and British commercial television) the film is fragmented by commercial breaks. This disruption is one of the key arguments Waller makes against the effectiveness of TV horror movies, suggesting not only that disruption to the narrative flow undermines the emotional engagement horror requires but that the advertisements themselves serve as reassurance that all is well in the world (1987: 148).

Negotiating these disruptions does not necessarily limit the TV horror movie. Instead, these films display a multiple-act structure. Each act builds to a mini-climax before the commercial break, providing an episodic structure that builds suspense rather than dissipating it. This format operates particularly well within the investigative sub-genre of TV horror, as in *The Night Stalker*, where a journalist investigates a series of apparently vampiric murders in contemporary Las Vegas. Narrated in flashback by protagonist Carl Kolchak, *The Night Stalker* is broken down into sections. Kolchak explains the initial crimes in a detached journalistic fashion and then follows different stages of the investigation. Each section concludes with a cliffhanger that becomes increasingly dramatic and suspenseful as the film progresses. The first commercial break comes at a pivotal moment during a press conference where the county coroner explains autopsy results from the first two victims. The

episode breaks when he reveals that human saliva was found in the victims' neck wounds, then returns to the story as chaos erupts in response. The next break comes after we see the vampire for the first time as he is about to attack his fifth victim. The final shot is a haunting extreme close-up of his blood-shot, lust-filled eyes which fade to black. The intensity of these breaks escalates as Kolchak's pursuit of the vampire draws him further into the supernatural with the final break occurring just before dawn while Kolchak searches the vampire's empty house as the vampire arrives home. In *The Night Stalker* commercial breaks do not dilute the horror but focus attention on elements of the vampire hunt, thus generating and enhancing narrative suspense. The episodic structure is fundamental to the audience's emotional response.

Waller also suggests that commercials undermine the generation of horror by pulling the audience out of the horror drama and 'transporting [them] to a clean, safe, brightly lit, quotidian normal world in which solving problems is simply a matter of buying the right product' (1987: 148). In the case of *The Night Stalker*, however, the film is deliberately set in the 'quotidian normal world' and the commercials are instead an unsettling reminder that Kolchak's world is not too different from our own. This is driven home by Kolchak's concluding voice-over, directly addressed to the audience:

> So think about it and try to tell yourself wherever you may be, in the quiet of your home, in the safety of your bed … try to tell yourself that it couldn't happen to you.

In *The Night Stalker,* along with *The Night Strangler, The Norliss Tapes* and *The Curse of the Black Widow*, producer/director Dan Curtis deliberately situates the fantastic within a very ordinary reality in order to blur the boundaries between the real and the fictional, with television serving as an effective bridge between the two.

As TV narratives become serialized through the TV mini-series or serial, the episodic nature of television becomes more pronounced and is increasingly used as a source of horror. Here the narrative needs to build in not only commercial breaks but also breaks between

episodes. As Mick Garris, director of mini-series *The Stand* and *The Shining*, and the TV movie *Desperation*, explains:

> You can't just start your story at the beginning and work all the way to the end. You have to pause and you have to build in a lot of little mini-climaxes and cliffhangers that leave you hanging. This is particularly difficult when you are building tension, suspense, horror and all of that (Garris 2003).

Consequently, the creator of a horror mini-series paces the narrative to ensure that unease intensifies with each episode, gradually building to a horrific climax.

Stephen King's original three part mini-series *Storm of the Century*, set in a small-town preparing for a major snow storm, uses this format to establish community relationships and tensions, slowly revealing hidden secrets. It also builds anticipation for the oncoming storm which hits full force in episode 3. Most importantly, *Storm of the Century* introduces the menacing André Lenoge in episode 1 when he is arrested for murder, and then builds growing evidence of Lenoge's demonic power as he quietly wreaks havoc from his jail cell. Tensions mount as Lenoge reveals the town's secrets: one farmer supplements his income by growing marijuana, while grocery store clerk, Cat Withers, unbeknownst to her boyfriend, has had an abortion. By episode 2 Lenoge subtly manipulates various people to either commit suicide or murder. Throughout, Lenoge repeatedly asserts 'give me what I want and I'll go away'. This escalation of violence leads to growing fear within the community that climaxes when Lenoge, in episode 3, finally reveals that what he wants is one of the town's children to raise as his own. More disturbing, the town, now consumed by terror, agrees to his demand. Here the time provided by the mini-series format builds sufficient tension to make such capitulation believable. Furthermore, seriality develops the community dynamic that characterizes Little Tall Island before it is ripped apart by one monstrous decision, providing the conclusion with the necessary emotional impact.

Serial format can also turn television into an event, further enhancing its horror effect. Most American television mini-series are

marketed as major events since they are a break from normal programming, but even on British TV, where the serial format is more common it can still be constructed as an event. In 1958–59, the BBC live serial *Quatermass and the Pit* famously emptied pubs across the country as people rushed home to see it. Dave Rolinson and Nick Cooper note: '*The Times* of January 27, 1959, reported that at least one seat of local government attempted to adjourn so that its members could watch the final episode' (2002: 162). In 2009, BBC's *Torchwood* changed format for its third series from a thirteen-week flexi-narrative to a five-part serial running daily on 6–10 July 2009. This format change, along with moving the show to the flagship BBC One, gave *Torchwood* an unprecedented level of attention. Almost every UK newspaper listed it as a must-see while the first episode gained an audience of 6.1 million people, making *Torchwood: Children of Earth* a notable TV event.

This event-quality was intensified by the way the new format mirrored the story's timeline: a sinister alien attack upon the Earth takes place over five consecutive days. Events begin on Day One (3:1) when the British government receives a secret alien transmission while globally all children freeze in unison and repeat the words 'we are coming' in an eerie monotone. The uncanniness of this world event is given an additional frisson at the episode's climax when the children again chant 'we are coming' but the final repetition adds the word 'back' just before cutting to black. This startling conclusion leaves the audience with many unsettling questions – who are 'they', when were they here before, and what is the meaning of the transmission? From this point on, timetables and deadlines feature prominently, driving the narrative forward, building a sense of impending doom, and, most importantly, drawing the audience back for each instalment. For instance, on Day Two (3.2) the children begin chanting 'we are coming tomorrow.' On Day Three (3.3) they chant 'we are here' while pointing toward London. Day Four (3.4) concludes dramatically with the aliens poisoning everyone in Thames House, where diplomatic meetings are being held, including one of the lead characters, Ianto Jones.

The sense of doom builds with each episode, reaching its darkest tone on Day Five (3.5), the final deadline to hand over 10 per cent of the world's children. What begins as a mystery ends as an atrocity. The government's attempts to deliver the children is averted by an even more disturbing finale in which Torchwood leader Captain Jack Harkness sacrifices his own grandson to destroy the aliens and save the world. The emotional impact of this act and the series comes from the build up of tension over five episodes, intensively viewed in one week.

3.1 'Day One' Torchwood: *Children of Earth*

Both *Storm of the Century* and *Torchwood: Children of Earth* conclude with a shocking sacrifice confirming that, while danger may be averted, normality can never be fully restored. Instead, the inherent monstrousness within humanity is revealed, never to be contained again. So while Waller suggests that TV horror tends to be conservative, TV horror serials privilege the open ending and the dystopian horrors of humanity.

SINGULAR HORROR? ANTHOLOGY SERIES AND PORTMANTEAU FORMS

The anthology format was common in television's early years and it showcased single play dramas, with guest stars and directors, as in *The Twilight Zone*, *The Outer Limits*, *One Step Beyond* and *Tales of*

the Unexpected. Television gradually moved towards series drama for economic reasons, and anthology shows became rarer. Later versions such as *Hammer House of Horror* or *Roald Dahl's Tales of the Unexpected* traded on a kind of brand recognition, and more recently *Masters of Horror* and *Fear, Itself* revived the notion of single plays united under a common genre and title.

As Stan Beeler points out in a discussion of *The Twilight Zone*, such shows offered different attractions to today's serial TV. For the audience 'pleasure in the episode was not immersion in a highly developed alternate reality, so the lack of narrative continuity between episodes did not matter' (2010a: 57). In earlier anthology shows, continuity was provided by a host, like Rod Serling in *The Twilight Zone* and *Night Gallery*, or John Newland in *One Step Beyond*. Hosts introduced the story and might offer closing comment, in line with the 'intimacy' of early TV, which was often dominated by talking heads (see Chapter 5 for more on the host). As Beeler's comment about audience pleasure also implies, the appeal of anthology shows lay in the opportunities offered for original and 'intelligent' stories, and the anthology show ranged across a variety of topics and genres, often mixing horror, science fiction and fantasy.

The Twilight Zone's '"unrealistic genre",' observes Beeler, 'allowed Serling to deal with questions of social justice and ethics that would otherwise not have been acceptable for broadcast' (2010a: 56). The 'thought-provoking' nature of the single play found a natural home in the allegorical genres of science fiction or horror, well-suited to philosophizing or conveying messages. This may make horror 'safe' for television, but it also directs attention to underlying themes. Serling's prologue to the *Night Gallery* story 'Eyes' for instance, introduces its main character as 'an imperious, predatory dowager who will soon find a darkness blacker than blindness', and the segment meditates on selfishness and obsession. 'My abiding concern, my singular preoccupation is – myself', the rich protagonist tells the doctor who will surgically give her new eyes, and with them sight for the first time, if only for a few hours. In pursuing her 'singular preoccupation' she ruins several lives, only to have the briefest glimpse of sight because of an untimely power outage. Ultimately,

she kills herself. Horror resides in the depth of her obsession and the consequence of its frustration.

Anthology shows from all periods take familiar horror tropes and reinvent them. Thus *One Step Beyond*'s 'The Dead Part of the House' (1.9) and *Night Gallery*'s 'The Doll' (13/1/71) both feature a sinister doll. The former is set in the twentieth century as a widower in Sausalito, California comes to terms with raising his young daughter alone. The dolls who talk to his little girl derive from ghost stories and haunted house horror, and the past reaches into the familiar, mundane present day. The twist here is that the dolls/child ghosts are benevolent: they died of parental neglect but help heal the rift between child and father in a reassuring ending. 'The Doll' also features a gothic old house and an orphaned child, this time in the care of a nanny and a military uncle, her isolation likewise leaving her vulnerable to the doll's influence. Here, though, the past that influences the present is the legacy of British colonial oppression in India, and the doll is a tool of vengeance for Pandit Chola, whose brother was executed for resisting British rule. The Colonel sacrifices himself to save the child yet passes on the curse to his attacker, via the gift of another doll. *Hammer House of Horror*'s 'Children of the Full Moon' (1.8) takes up a well-worn horror trope: the werewolf. When a modern-day couple's car breaks down, they find an isolated old house and traditional gothic horror is again invoked. The couple are welcomed into the house by middle-aged housekeeper Mrs Ardoy (Diana Dors, playing against type as Wheatley notes, 2006: 85) and while the resident pack of mysterious children are unusual and several strange events occur, the couple soon return to their normal lives. They are not unaffected, however and gradual changes in the now-pregnant woman are related by the man to a work colleague until the final scenes show her return to the house to give birth to a werewolf child. This episode affords an oscillation typical of *Hammer House of Horror* stories between the everyday and the frenziedly horrific.

Another segment of *Night Gallery*, 'The House' (written by Serling, 30/13/70), diverges completely from conventional horror. Its settings are not simply mundane and contemporary, they are drenched in

sunlight, and its protagonist assures us that she feels 'no apprehension … no disquiet at all' about the recurring dream the story focuses on. In the dream (sunlit and in slow motion) she drives up to a house and knocks on the door, but no one answers and she leaves. She describes the dream during some form of therapy then, on leaving the sanatorium to return to 'normal life', she finds the dream house and moves in at once, despite rumours that it is haunted. As she rests upstairs she hears a car approach and then a knock at the door. Reaching the door too late to face the caller, she realizes that this is the ghost – but it is also herself. The frisson here comes partly from the hypnotic atmosphere of the dream, but also because by the end of the story it is unclear which woman is real or what would happen if the two versions came face to face. This seemingly innocuous tale plays on uncanny repetition and doubling, perennial features of horror.

Despite the assumption that earlier periods of horror production have restorative endings, and despite the apparently self-contained nature of an anthology episode, as with the serial TV horror already discussed, none of the above examples have definitive conclusions. While 'The Dead Part of the House' reassures the viewer with a happy ending, the ghosts still inhabit the house. Moreover, some examples suggest *cycles* of horror – the repeated rape of women adds to the werewolf pack, vengeance continues as the Colonel sends another doll to his attacker – that persist beyond the episode. Thus, the anthology format matches the repetition and inconclusiveness often integral to horror, with the repetition of a recurring TV show, albeit one made up of single plays.

Likewise, the portmanteau format offers a variety of stories with a common link. *Dead of Night* has the characters whose stories comprise the film meet in a house, Amicus' *Dr Terror's House of Horrors* (1965) uses a train carriage as the link, while the unifying element in *Trilogy of Terror* is the same lead, Karen Black. Mark Gatiss' *Crooked House* was promoted by the BBC as part of an ongoing tradition Christmas ghost stories (see Wheatley 2006) but Gatiss also identifies it as a homage to portmanteau horror movies.

> *Crooked House* began life as a single, 30-minute ghost story. However, BBC Four were keen to turn it into more of an 'event', so I chanced my arm and pitched three! This not only gave me the chance to write some ghost stories for Christmas – a lifelong ambition – but, by joining the three together in a 90-minute version, to pay tribute to the portmanteau-style horror films which I adore.
>
> ('A Crooked Christmas on BBC Four')

Here, as in the films it alludes to, a frame story links the segments, with both a narrator figure (a museum curator played by Gatiss) and a location cohering different time periods (also seen in miniseries *Marchlands*). When protagonist Ben brings an old door knocker to his local museum, the curator tells him about the house it came from, Geap Manor: one story is about the building of the house and the suicide of its owner, another about a ghost bride whose wedding went tragically wrong. The final story is Ben's own, as he becomes embroiled with a necromancer from the Manor's past, leading to a satisfying twist. The linking of the different periods and stories, as well as the positioning of *Crooked House* within two horror traditions from different media, as emphasized by creator Gatiss – Christmas ghost stories on television and portmanteau films – signal its use of repetition and cycles of horror, elements that become more obvious as the TV series proper evolves.

THE SHOW YOU USED TO RUN HOME FROM SCHOOL TO WATCH: HORROR DRAMAS AND SOAPS

TV movies, mini-series and anthology programmes, while differing in how they tell their stories, all feature stand-alone narratives. The TV series and serialized soap opera are, however, regular daily or weekly features within TV schedules and therefore negotiate their narratives and horror effects in very different ways. The TV series, as Christine Geraghty argues, 'offers the audience a set of characters and very often a place … with which we become familiar', these reappear every week in a different story that requires resolution by

the end of the episode. In soap opera, however, stories continue from episode to episode and 'are never finally resolved'. 'Even soaps which cease to be made', Geraghty argues, 'project themselves in a non-existent future' (1990: 11).

These different televisual forms yield distinct horror products and can be best exemplified by two productions, *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* (the series spin-off from Curtis's TV movies *The Night Stalker* and *The Night Strangler*) and Curtis's *Dark Shadows,* a supernatural daytime soap opera. *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* repackaged the formula established in the successful television movies as a series in which each week reporter Kolchak investigates a different supernatural creature – werewolf, zombie or mummy – that Kolchak defeats by the episode's end. This format can best be described as monster-of-the-week television: the narrative formula is fixed and weekly variation is provided by the monster and the methods Kolchak uses to stop it. This approach arguably works against the generation of horror as the familiar formula undermines any sense of threat or peril. Once acquainted with the formula, we know that although Kolchak will encounter a dangerous monster, he will destroy it. In many ways the horror *series* is the epitome of Tudor's notion of secure horror in which 'normality is interrupted by a destabilising influence, a monster', the monster is destroyed and 'order (of some kind) is restored' (1995: 34).

Yet the TV series offers a subtle challenge to this security as its formulaic repetition reminds us on a weekly basis that normality is not restored. *Kolchak*, like its TV movie predecessors, deliberately sets itself in a familiar, modern location – this time Chicago. Its realist televisual style (night-time location shooting, hand-held cinematography and a grainy visual style) grounds Kolchak's narrative in the real world. While the authorities repeatedly attempt rational explanations, Kolchak uncovers crimes committed by a revivified Jack the Ripper ('The Ripper', 1.1), aliens ('They Have Been, They Are, They Will be', 1.3) or the devil ('The Devil's Platform', 1.7). Kolchak shatters traditional concepts of normality in favour of a new understanding and is consistently at odds with authorities who suppress the truth and maintain the status quo. In *Kolchak*,

government officials, whether police chiefs, senators or the more ambiguous Men in Black, are portrayed as at best in denial and at worst party to an institutionalized cover up ('They Have Been'), linking the show with developments in horror cinema that increasingly channelled the nation's growing disillusionment. As Muir explains, '[i]n a time when people were cynical about their elected leaders (because of Watergate), Kolchak's constant besting of city hall was an optimistic battle cry for individualism and the importance of a single voice' (2001: 71). This is driven home in 'The Devil's Platform' when Kolchak discovers that an up and coming Senatorial candidate, Robert D. Palmer, has sold his soul to the devil in order to win an election. Kolchak tries to expose Palmer but encounters resistance, complaining, 'That's what's wrong with this country. Nobody cares. You try to warn them. Do they listen? No. Nobody listens. Nobody cares'. His campaign to stop corruption from reaching the White House calls to mind the corruption already exposed by two other journalists, Woodward and Bernstein. Kolchak simply takes their campaign further. When his editor won't print the story, he tries to stop Palmer himself.

The horror series format was not exclusive to Kolchak, but can be seen in programmes such as *The Sixth Sense*, *Friday the 13th: The Series*, and *Werewolf*. Like Kolchak, most of these series did not last long as the formula provided too little variation. *Kolchak*, however, has had a lasting influence, revived in syndication and on DVD and influencing such recent horror television as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer, The X-Files* and the short-lived remake *The Night Stalker*. Chris Carter, creator of *The X-Files*, acknowledged his debt to *Kolchak* by casting Kolchak star Darren McGavin as recurring characters in both *The X-Files* and its spin-off *Millennium*: such intertextual casting reminds knowing audiences that it all starts with Kolchak. What these series borrowed from *Kolchak*, at least in part, was the monster-of-the-week formula in which Buffy, Mulder and Scully, and the modern day Kolchak fight a different supernatural creature every episode. While *The X-Files*, like *Kolchak*, used this formula to challenge a rational world view and to offer a conspiracy narrative for the

millennium, the teen vampire series *Buffy* adapted the formula as a vehicle for adolescent anxieties or issues (see Wilcox 2005). Additionally, each of these series introduced a soap opera narrative to develop audience identification with the characters and further the shows' seasonal arc narratives.

On the surface, the soap opera, one of the purest of televisual forms, seems incompatible with horror. The audience for horror is generally seen to be teenage boys while soaps are aimed at women.[5] Furthermore, soap operas tend to be intimate and focused on the domestic, lacking the broad scope and spectacle that usually characterizes horror. Despite this seeming opposition, the soap opera has been integrated with horror on a few notable occasions. David Lynch and Mark Frost's *Twin Peaks* is a significant example that merges the two genres to produce a form of televisual American gothic exposing the dark underside of small-town America, with a serial narrative following the investigation into the murder of high school Prom Queen Laura Palmer. This format has subsequently been adopted by Alan Ball's *True Blood*, discussed in Chapter 6.

The soap opera format is at its purest in the cult TV phenomenon *Dark Shadows*, which first aired on ABC between 1966 and 1971 and was later remade as a prime-time soap in 1991. This series offers a distinctive case study of what the soap opera format brings to horror, and exemplifies the manner in which the genre reaches a far more diverse audience than is usually expected. Broadcast at the afterschool time of 4pm, the series' fan base consisted of middle-aged women, usually housewives home raising their children, and teenage boys who ran home from school to watch the show; this became a promotional tagline for the series' video and DVD release. *Dark Shadows* integrates intimate melodrama with real scares and horror for this mixed audience. Waller argues that the intimacy of television undermines horror by restricting the narrative to the domestic and the individual (1987: 151-52). While *Dark Shadows*, like *Twin Peaks* and *True Blood*, is set in an isolated community, divorced in many ways from the larger world, the intimate television format brings a specifically televisual dimension to horror, namely lack of

narrative resolution and an increase in moral ambiguity. In this manner, as Muir argues, 'the era of modern terror television *really* dawns with the 1966–71 TV daytime drama' (2001: 296).

Beginning with the arrival of governess Victoria Winters in the sleepy town of Collinsport, Maine, *Dark Shadows* ran daily for five years, producing a total of 1,225 30-minute episodes. This extensive run makes it the most substantial example of TV horror to date. The story is continuous and, like conventional soap operas, focuses largely on the domestic with one family, the Collins, at its narrative centre. Unlike most soap operas, however, this show is populated by ghosts, vampires, werewolves, witches and demons. Originally conceived as a traditional soap with a gothic atmosphere, failing ratings encouraged Curtis to introduce supernatural storylines, beginning with Laura Stockbridge's ghostly return to Collinsport to reclaim her son David. As a result of increased ratings, when this storyline approached resolution the ghost was replaced by a vampire, Barnabas Collins. Now ratings soared and the supernatural formula continued. Although Barnabas, the surprise success of the series, remained a central character, other supernatural figures and storylines helped carry the show forward, including werewolf Quentin Collins, a Frankenstein monster named Adam, and various other vampires, witches and ghosts. Furthermore, extensive flashback narratives set in 1795 and 1897, lasting for months at a time, provided an extensive back story, and the show also introduced a parallel universe narrative in which actors played alternate versions of their usual characters. Using the seriality of the soap opera to play with time undermined the notion of restoring 'normality', as it confirmed that no sense of normality existed in Collinsport. The representation of space within *Dark Shadows* may be isolated and contained, 'Brigadoonish' in Jonathan Frid's terms (quoted in Edwards 1998: 162), but its representation of time was unlimited.

Geraghty argues that 'a soap's endless future means that an ultimate conclusion can never be reached and soaps are thus based on a premise of continuous disruption' (1990: 15). The cancellation of the original *Dark Shadows* encouraged the writers to attempt some form of closure and restoration of normality. Yet the show's

conclusion takes place in an alternate universe, so it does not completely resolve all that came before, a fact confirmed by the continuation of *Dark Shadows* in book and radio form.[6] More importantly, horror series following *Dark Shadows* increasingly opted for open endings prioritizing continuance rather than resolution. *Angel* ends on a major clash between the forces of good and evil suggesting that the battle will continue forever, while *American Gothic* concluded with the angelic ghost Merlyn sacrificing herself to save her brother Caleb, but in so doing leaving him under the influence of the satanic Sheriff Buck. *Twin Peaks*, cancelled in its second season, has the bleakest conclusion with the heroic FBI agent Dale Cooper, seemingly replaced by his evil doppelganger. The final image of Cooper looking into the mirror as evil spirit Bob looks back is a haunting image of corrupt innocence, a theme that began the series with the discovery of Laura Palmer's body. The seriality of *Twin Peaks* offers no resolution but instead attests to the omnipresence of evil.

Another side effect of *Dark Shadows*' seriality was increasing moral ambiguity surrounding its monsters. On *Kolchak*, monsters were generally presented as loose in the modern world: either invisible and anonymous, like the aliens in 'They Have Been', or simply evil as in 'The Ripper'. Even the werewolf, usually a more sympathetic horror monster because it is cursed with a monstrous condition, was presented as cold and angry in human form, violent and barbaric as a wolfman ('The Werewolf', 1.5). Kolchak shoots him and throws him into the ocean without a second thought. On *Dark Shadows*, however, things were not this simple. The ghost Laura was a dangerous presence bent on destroying her own son and others determined to stop her. With Barnabas Collins things became more complicated. Curtis explains that he first introduced the vampire, simply to have Barnabas – in *Dracula* fashion – terrorize the town, attack the women and then be staked by the town's leaders over a few weeks (Thompson 2009: 57). Unexpectedly, however, fan letters for Barnabas began to arrive at the studio and it became apparent that fans saw the vampire as reluctant rather than evil. Geraghty

argues that in soap operas 'the viewer … brings richness and density to material which on the surface can look thin and unrewarding' (1990: 15). Barnabas was new to the show so audiences were not responding to a familiar character but rather identified with the isolation and loneliness conveyed through Frid's performance and the intimacy of television (see Chapter 10's further discussion of *Dark Shadows* fandom). This identification led to the fans' collective interpretation of the character as sympathetic, which ultimately shaped his development. Responding to the fans, Curtis did not destroy Collins and began to write the character differently. Thus, the writers introduced a tragic love story between Barnabas and Josette; they had Barnabas attempt to find a cure for his vampirism; and an extended flashback narrative proved that Barnabas' affliction was a curse upon his soul.

Barnabas epitomized the new reluctant vampire, filled with loathing for his condition. This moral ambiguity did not dilute horror for television but rather showcased its human side. Barnabas is torn between his vampiric instincts and his humanity, capable of both good and evil. He performs horrible acts, attacking the barmaid Maggie Evans, enslaving Carolyn Collins and threatening young David Collins, but also demonstrates great tenderness towards Victoria and attempts to help werewolf Chris Jennings. Appearing on television just seven years after Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* signalled a modern age of horror, and one year before *Night of the Living Dead* and *Rosemary's Baby* ushered it in, Barnabas, through soap opera seriality, presented a new face of horror for television – both familiar and monstrous. The soap opera format would never be so fully integrated with horror as in *Dark Shadows* but, as many commentators have observed, the contemporary television series increasingly incorporates elements of soap narrative.

SUPERNATURAL: 'TV's BEST HORROR SHOW'

Waller's comment that 'commercial television's affinity for the series format … always presupposes a stockpile of eight million potential

stories' (1987: 151) is meant to contrast his description of cinematic horror as narrative-driven. Yet it also identifies the episodic monster-of-the-week structure described above. Such narrative structures, as Sergio Angelini and Miles Booy note, are partly driven by the needs of certain production eras. Contemporary television drama, they note, is 'marked by the degree to which seriality and other soap opera elements have been embraced as an organizing principle and as a strategy to strengthen viewer loyalty, something once anathema to Network schedulers but now the norm' (2010: 25). Thus *Supernatural* adopts a flexi-narrative that includes monster-of-the-week episodes, season arcs and ongoing relationship stories. Its basic premise – two brothers who hunt ghosts and demons – neatly encapsulates both repetitive, episodic horror ('saving people, hunting things') and ongoing character development.

Like *The X-Files*, *Supernatural* focuses on two main characters, although its treatment and development of these protagonists is markedly different. While Mulder and Scully, in common with Kolchak, primarily serve the narrative function of investigating the unexplained – with little attention to their history, or development beyond what furthers the narrative or mythology (the backstory of Mulder's sister's abduction, Scully's scientific training and religious belief) – Dean and Sam Winchester are at the centre of *Supernatural*. The episodic format means few other characters distract from them. Their father, John, is an absent presence and *Supernatural* features scant recurring characters (Bobby Singer and the angel Castiel being obvious exceptions). The show deals as much with the brothers' relationship as with their demon-hunting activities: the two elements (character and narrative) are intertwined and Alison Peirse notes how the repetition of Kansas' rock song 'Carry on My Wayward Son' 'encapsulates central familial themes of the show' (2010a: 266).

Creeber suggests that grand epics lend themselves to mini-series (2004: 6), while intimacy and continuity are reserved for soaps (9) but he observes the same conflation of soap and drama noted by Angelini and Booy. Thus, he argues, a mini-series with epic historical scale (like *Holocaust*) can offer a soap-like 'intense and emotional familiarity with its characters' (2004: 31) because serialized structure

'allows viewers to grow intensely familiar with both … characters and settings' (58). *Supernatural* anchors its episodic horror with both epic mythology and soap-like relationship arcs. 'The relationship between the two brothers and their driving force is what keeps people coming back week to week', comments actor Jensen Ackles (quoted in Watt 2009: 51). He develops this angle, saying the show's 'ever-evolving' narrative allows enjoyment of 'not necessarily just horror but this type of big, epic storyline'. Thus season arcs deal with the Winchester family (finding John in the first season, Dean going to hell in Season 3), and the overarching narrative structure takes Sam's birth and mother Mary's death as its starting point (in the pilot and in various flashbacks, which eventually move back before this point, prequel-style). Alongside this concern with character backstory, motivation and development, however, sits the 'epic' arc of the battle between good and evil which envelops the Winchester family story as we discover that Sam's birth was engineered by demon Azazel to provide a vessel for Lucifer, and that both Dean and Sam have long-prophesied roles to play in an apocalyptic struggle for power between demons and angels. Thus, while Mary Winchester's killing by Azazel at first seems to be a typical motivation for John, Dean, and Sam's involvement with the supernatural and their mission of 'saving people, hunting things', it becomes part of a larger narrative in which individuals, even humans, are not important. The complex intertwining of these two, apparently distinct, elements distinguishes *Supernatural*'s use of narrative and genre structures. While certain horror elements recur across different seasons (the Croatoan virus, the hellhounds, a generation of demon-spawn with supernatural powers), character provides ultimate coherence to episodic horror action, fixing it firmly within the show's evolving mythology.

Just as the (character-based) start point of Mary's death, images of which repeatedly return, and the (mythology-based) endpoint of the apocalypse,[7] glimpsed in various episodes, are rendered in the recognizable visual language of flashback and flashforward, so too the packaging of each episode and season into standard TV format highlights narrative structure. Rather than the usual 'previously on'

recap at the start of an episode, *Supernatural* offers distinctive 'Then' and 'Now' titles to signal recap and return to current storylines. In season finales an extended recap under the title 'The Road So Far,' nods to the road genre format that enables the episodic structure (the brothers travel the back roads of the USA following supernatural activity) and offers pleasurable re-viewing of season highlights for faithful audience members. Similarly, most episodes begin and end with the brothers travelling to, or departing from their latest encounter, underlining the narrative's ongoing nature, despite case-by-case resolution of individual mini-narratives.

While Noël Carroll sees horror as mostly narrative (1990: 97) in that it is structured by the formula onset, discovery, confirmation, and confrontation (99) such models really apply to horror cinema. TV shows like *Buffy*, *Angel*, *The X-Files* and *Supernatural* portray an endless cycle of supernatural horrors that may have micro-victories or resolutions but that, by its very nature, continues beyond one life-span (in *Buffy* a Slayer is born into every generation; *Angel* and *Supernatural* both deal with prophecy and apocalypse; *The X-Files* consistently refers back to World War II and the 1950s). The televisual structure of horror relies more on repetition and cycles than linear narrative. Hills sees repetition as central to the operation of horror (2005a: 64) and, as Wheatley notes, serial drama relies on repetitive structures to foster identification and familiarity (2006: 180), making horror and serial TV ideal partners.

Supernatural's adaptation of the episodic format does not ignore resolution. Ackles cites creator, Eric Kripke, 'I like to answer questions, then move on to different ones' (quoted in Watt 2009: 51), suggesting that resolution is valued as a structuring device as well as an attraction for audiences. Thus, the show has the brothers find their elusive father, only to lose him in a dramatic encounter with the demon that killed their mother. This killing itself is elaborated on in various episodes that reveal more family history (particularly 'In the Beginning' 4.3 and 'The Song Remains the Same' 5.13). Sam's birth is first problematized in terms of this history of violence, then revealed to be part of a larger demonic war against humanity, and eventually we discover that this war is not so much against humanity as

between angels, with the goal of freeing Lucifer from his prison for a re-match with archangel Michael (Sam and Dean are prophesied to be physical vessels for these two entities). Plot elements are resolved and these answers sometimes lead to further development, related to cycles of history or mythology. That Sam and Dean, like Lucifer and Michael, are brothers with an absent father collapses family drama and epic mythology together. Kripke's favourite episodes (as listed on www.buddytv.com) are predominantly character-centred, teasing out aspects of Dean, Sam and John's relationships through the vehicle of stressful demon-fighting, such as 'Devil's Trap' (1.22) or 'Bloodlust' (2.3), even when laced with comedy, as in 'A Very Supernatural Christmas' (3.8) and 'Mystery Spot' (3.11).

Character is also embedded in narrative serialization. In his examination of soap aspects in TV drama, Creeber notes that 'identity itself is now a matter of continual renewal rather than compulsory inheritance' (2004: 121), and Dean and Sam's ongoing reflection on their roles as hunters and as brothers, struggling to distinguish themselves from their father and from each other, explores contemporary masculinity. The search that motivates their journey together in the first season is resolved by John's death. However, the way John raised his sons is a constant touchstone in the brothers' self-reflection. Bobby, an acquaintance of John and a hunter himself, becomes a more benevolent father-figure to Dean and Sam, and he and other characters often point out similarities or differences between the three Winchesters. This familiar trope positions John as professional and personal role model (with positive and negative features) and as another, perhaps outmoded, version of masculinity. Debates about masculinity foregrounded in and by the show's narratives also speak to genre, engaging both the supposed 'masculinity' of horror and 'femininity' of soap and melodrama, leading to descriptions like 'boy soap'. Thus Jacob Clifton describes the show as presenting 'a universe of Otherized and fetishized femininity that surrounds the narrative's all-male viewpoint' (2009: 139). In this sense, as well as in its recycling of horror motifs and monsters, the show attempts to 'reread and rewrite existing stories and characters' and acts as a 'blatant celebration and transformation

of the countless other horror texts being appropriated' (Turner 2009: 156).

Supernatural's structure heightens the sense of intimacy between characters, and between characters and audience. Typical scenarios such as the brothers in the car or sharing a motel room enhance the sense of close quarters living. Without an ensemble cast to spread the emotional load, both work and family take on a claustrophobic intimacy that causes tension. Typically, one or other will open up to outsiders, as when Dean talks about John's death and the strain of hunting to fellow hunter Gordon Walker in 'Bloodlust' (2.3). Given such cues, the audience can then trace the professional and emotional strain Dean and Sam are under in other scenes even if it is not overtly articulated. Episodes laying bare the brothers' family history develop their roles: Sam is the rebel who left 'the family business' to strike out on his own, Dean the faithful son who stays to help his father and later seeks out his brother. By offering small but significant character developments, the show encourages audience sympathy with first one and then the alternate position, with both brothers sometimes acting sincerely, at others allowing their 'issues' to lead them into irresponsible or selfish behaviour (as when Bobby castigates them for forgetting that he sold his soul during their fight against Lucifer, 'Weekend at Bobby's' 6.4). Writer Jane Espenson notes of cult TV, 'Moral shadings and unexpected weaknesses, and the way a character evolves over the course of a show, these all help make complicated people' (2010: 49); in other words, familiar characters are constantly embellished. Foregrounded consistently is the Winchester men's capacity to sacrifice themselves for each other, as first John, and then Dean and Sam attempt to shoulder the burden on behalf of another (John makes a deal with Azazel to save Dean's life; Dean later makes a deal with the crossroads demon to save Sam). As the seasons build, this bond of family love is debated as both a weakness ('Mystery Spot' 3.11) and a strength.

Carol Poole argues that from the start, *Supernatural* positions itself in terms of horror conventions: its 'opening scenes are so saturated with familiar tropes that we don't except to see anything exactly new here' (2009: 143). Its newness lies in merging

conventions drawn from various places (horror, TV, serial, episodic). Without the complex weaving together of soap-style relationship arcs that involves the viewer in the intimate emotional lives of its protagonists, its horror monsters would have little resonance. It is our investment in seeing both the characters and the narrative develop in entirely televisual fashion, ever moving through a landscape of motels, monsters and myth drawn from horror traditions, that makes it, as *Fangoria* trumpets, 'TV's best horror show' (Timpone 2009: 5) – the ultimate in TV serialized horror.

What *Supernatural* and the other case studies in this chapter demonstrate is that TV horror emerges when TV movies, series and serials stop trying to be like cinematic or literary horror but embrace the televisual, in all of its diverse formats. These productions prove that fragmentation, repetition and seriality – characteristics inherent in television – immerse audiences within horror narratives while also lending themselves to the dystopian vision of modern horror, making television an ideal place for the genre.

4. Adaptation

Translating Horror Tales

> There are precious few stories around that have not been 'lovingly ripped off' from others.
>
> (Hutcheon 2006: 177)

Scholarly analysis of adaptation has moved beyond the simplistic notion of fidelity to the original, exploring different understandings through variant terms like 'translation', 'appropriation', or 'reimagining.' To many, adaptation means the transformation of a novel, novella or short story into a film or teleplay, yet all kinds of adaptation traffic exists – from novels to TV mini-series, from comic books to TV drama[8], from film to TV and back again. The US miniseries *Kingdom Hospital* (2004), sometimes known as *Stephen King's Kingdom Hospital* (discussed in Chapter 8), is a direct if loose remake of Lars von Trier's Danish *Riget* (*The Kingdom*, 1994) and can be read as a televisual adaptation, or national translation, of television. While the notion of the 'original' has dominated thinking about adaptation, increasingly production suggests that there is no such thing. DVD releases often include deleted scenes or 'director's cuts' and cinema and TV (like other fictions) constantly recycle stories and images (as the epigraph to this chapter notes). With gothic 'classics' that are regularly adapted for television, such as *Dracula* or *Frankenstein*, do re/creators work from the 'original' novel, the early film versions, an iconic TV mini-series, or the last successful

adaptation? As our case studies show, several, if not all, are likely to be factors.

Genre itself is a process of adaptation, so it is hardly surprising that TV horror reworks horror classics. Viewers of *Carnivàle* (especially 'Pick a Number' 1.6) and *The X-Files* episode 'Humbug' (2.20) might note their debt to Tod Browning's controversial film *Freaks*, while *The X-Files*' 'Post-modern Prometheus' (5.5) and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*'s 'Some Assembly Required' (2.2) retell the story of *Frankenstein*. Such allusions might simply be intertextuality – *Supernatural* dips into a history of horror films for its first season, with *Ringu* and rural nightmares like *The Hills Have Eyes* and *Candyman* all referenced directly by storylines or visuals. However, when *Buffy*'s 'Buffy vs. Dracula' (5.1) finally 'does' *Dracula*, it incorporates what Buffy (and the audience) know from decades of stories, comics, films and TV reworkings of Stoker's tale.

'The Screwfly Solution', from the *Masters of Horror* anthology series, is described in the on-screen credits as an adaptation of a James Tiptree Jr story. Tiptree, a pseudonym of Alice Sheldon, wrote science fiction, and the 1977 Nebula-award-winning story 'The Screwfly Solution' was first published under another pseudonym, Racoona Sheldon. Tiptree/Sheldon's SF credentials make the story an unlikely candidate for *MoH* but the adaptation, by screenwriter Sam Hamm and Joe Dante, combines 'faithfulness' to the story with a subtle genre shift. Horror content is foregrounded by visualizing gruesome events from the story. Dante's films are not known for graphic sex and violence, yet included here is a scene described by editor Marshall Harvey as 'one of the goriest' Dante has 'ever shot' ('The Cinematic Solution', 2007).

The story deals with an unexplained plague escalating to apocalyptic proportions, taking its place alongside tales that can be read as either SF or horror (*28 Days Later*, *The Day of the Triffids*). In this case, an airborne pathogen affects men, inciting them to deadly violence against women, thus effectively wiping out the human population. Both story and adaptation ascribe the disease to aliens conquering the planet by stealth or, rather, cleansing it as human science eradicates pests like the screwfly. The aliens take a back

seat, however, and representation of violence signals the adaptation as horror. Hamm notes that the atmosphere is focused on how 'all of that common, everyday [sexist] behaviour begins to seem more and more sinister, more and more frightening' (Dante and Hamm 2007). After an opening 'documentary' on the screwfly, the film cuts to 'Houston, Texas' where an apparently genial man has killed three women in the family home, protesting that he was only trying to 'clean up'. Elaborating a throw-away line in the story, this situates the ensuing action as affective horror (through music cues, the presence of blood, and the general tone) rather than cerebral SF. Further depictions including the murder in the strip club (the gory scene cited by Harvey); the mayor with pants unzipped and blood on his shirtfront, exiting the room where a female epidemiologist was working; a dream protagonist Alan has of attacking his wife during sex; and two 'femicides' on a plane are visually and aurally rendered graphic. The final shots of the female protagonist Anne, down to her last three matches in a freezing British Columbia November, cutting to 'December' and a screen full of snowy interference provide the chilling end to this dark tale.

Adaptation uses a ready-made story, a handy short cut for anthology shows. Another appeal is that knowledge of the adapted material can be used to market the product. Most TV adaptations, argues Sarah Cardwell, are advertised as adaptations (2007: 181), and gothic classics trade on both the genre and the book's reputation to gain viewers. Helen Wheatley notes that this type of pre-sold audience makes gothic fiction a safe bet for domestic and international success (2006: 96) and this holds true even for 'modernizations' like the BBC's *Jekyll*, written by Steven Moffat and discussed in Chapter 5, which updates *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Moreover, while a novel must be compressed for a 120-minute film, a mini-series or TV serial has ample space to develop slowly. Linda V. Troost suggests that TV serials are 'satisfying' to novel readers, citing length, multiple plotlines and climaxes, and dialogue-heavy scenes as enjoyable features (2007: 78). This answers the common preconception that, as Albert J. Lavalley argues, adaptations 'threaten to simplify the book's complexities' (1979: 244), and these

'literary' features can attract an audience to an adaptation of a gothic novel, presenting it not strictly as horror but as a form of 'quality' period drama.

Taste and value are thus important factors for TV horror adaptation. Arguably the boom in 'heritage' films during the late twentieth century offers an alternative to action movies or blockbusters. On one hand, Wheatley notes, 'respectable, culturally valued television drama, often adapted from the Gothic's "classics" … appeal to television's regulators as well as its viewers' (2006: 27) but on the other, Mark Jancovich (1994: 6) observes that early gothic novels sparked off a moral panic similar to that surrounding comic books in the 1950s or 'video nasties' in 1980s Britain. *Frankenstein, Dracula* and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* blur the boundaries between the popular and the literary, the bad taste of horror and the prestige of heritage. In adaptation a fairly 'flexible definition of literary classics' pertains, according to Thomas Leitch, taking in popular works such as *Pygmalion*, *The Wizard of Oz*, or *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (2007: 155). Yet Stephen King's 1981 history of horror *Danse Macabre* suggests that the enduring gothic novels, 'live a kind of half-life outside the bright circle of English literature's acknowledged "classics", and perhaps with good reason' mainly because they 'can be seen as no more than popular novels of their day' (1981: 65).

This slippage from devalued low culture to valorized high culture is integral to the genre. We explore the way horror is ideally positioned to blur boundaries between trash and art more closely in Chapter 8. Here, our concern is with the values attached to different types of TV horror adaptations, values aligned with either high culture notions of the literary, or fan knowledge of the genre. Both situate viewers as audiences in the know, able to discuss the merits of an adaptation in relation to its source, to previous versions, or to other work by the same creators (producers, directors, actors, as well as the author of the adapted text). Thus, while the audience for adaptations of popular works by Tiptree or King may differ from that for a TV *Frankenstein,* both groups are targeted through their assumptions about and knowledge of the genre, and both identify themselves as discerning consumers by virtue of their cultural (or

subcultural) capital. Another *MoH* episode, 'The Damned Thing' a loose adaptation of the story by Ambrose Bierce, for example, does not play up its literary material, rather it adapts a brief, atmospheric story into a psychologically dark and graphically gory TV horror. As Donato Totaro comments, *MoH* 'stands as a refreshing contrast to the current tendency in theatrical horror of making films for the youth (13–16 years old) market' (2010: 89).

The case studies for this chapter address TV adaptations of the gothic novel *Frankenstein* and of more popular horror fictions by blockbuster author Stephen King, concluding with a brief examination of how horror anthology shows use adaptation. With literary adaptations authorship tends to remain with the 'original' author, so the Dan Curtis-directed TV movie *Dracula* is advertised as, for instance, 'a terrifying version of Bram Stoker's classic vampire legend' (though paradoxically it is titled *Dan Curtis's Dracula* on the DVD cover). This may partially explain the ephemeral nature of some TV adaptations of classics like *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*. Not all are available to buy, though some become cult classics; others gain critical attention at the time, then fade away. A selection (necessarily only a few) of *Frankensteins* takes in made-for-TV movies and mini-series, as well as two episodes from serial drama that 'do' Frankenstein in a more self-conscious, intertextual fashion.

In contrast, an alternative form of adaptation based upon less 'respectable' forms of literature includes works by established horror writers like Richard Matheson or Clive Barker. Adaptation of popular novels (as opposed to literary sources) tends to be both more invisible and more genre, according to Cardwell (2007: 191) and while this might apply to *Dexter* and the Jeff Lindsay novels, other horror adaptations on TV are targeted at horror fans and embrace the potentially subversive conventions of the genre, particularly for television. Such adaptations negotiate the horror elements for a slightly different audience and in a more popular register (contemporary settings, 'regular' American characters). The section on TV adaptations of Stephen King, perhaps the most prolific and iconic of contemporary horror writers, examines how a household

name can be used to market TV horror, but also how King himself has changed his view of television.

‘IT’S ALIVE!’: RE/CREATING *FRANKENSTEIN*

Frankenstein, written by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley and first published in 1818, is more than a popular text for adaptation: like Stoker’s *Dracula*, it provides enduring cultural icons, immediately recognizable to people who have never read the novel, seen a Frankenstein movie, or watched a TV adaptation. There is much appeal for adaptors in ‘larger-than-life figures whose mythopoetic appeal is iconic rather than psychological’ (Leitch 2007: 207), since their stories ‘revolve around a single protean figure, culturally stereotyped yet retrofitted in ideological terms for adaptation to different times and places’ (Hutcheon 2006: 153). Popular versions of Frankenstein’s monster and its creator Dr Frankenstein, the archetypal mad scientist, are not very accurate so far as the novel is concerned: the myth of Frankenstein has overtaken the ‘original’ novel. King claims that *Frankenstein* is ‘the subject of more films than any other literary work in history’ (1981: 67), Leitch states that the number of different actors to play Frankenstein’s monster is only exceeded by those playing Dracula and Tarzan (2007: 207), and there is even a Frankenstein Catalog (Donald F. Glut, 1984), listing adaptations and appropriations of the story. Frankenstein has been ‘adapted’ into a wide range of TV films; from Woody Woodpecker cartoon shorts (‘Frankenstymied’ 1961) to gothic soap opera *Dark Shadows*, which includes a being called Adam created from the life force of vampire Barnabas Collins (1967–68); from *Doctor Who* serial ‘The Brain of Morbius’ (1976) to early seasons of *Dexter*, which Douglas L. Howard argues is ‘yet another cultural variation on the Frankenstein myth’ (2010: 61) because Dexter is a ‘monster’ created by adoptive father Harry Morgan.

Frankenstein’s reputation as ‘horror’ may also be mythical: Les Daniels describes the novel as ‘an elaborate, sometimes clumsy discussion of problems involving education and morality’ (1977: 29)

while King notes that few scenes of violence and a highly articulate monster potentially reduce its horror (1981: 68). Thus, many versions of *Frankenstein* refer (or defer) to the 1931 Universal film directed by James Whale, which translates the novel's horror into gripping visual images. The influence of the creation scene ('hasty and perfunctory' in Shelley's novel, as Leitch notes, 2007: 97), Frankenstein's exclamation, 'It's alive!' and Jack Pierce's iconic makeup for Boris Karloff's monster is hard to overestimate. The theme of creation also makes *Frankenstein* an enduring text. Developments in science, especially bioethics, cause ongoing widespread debate, and adaptations tap into such anxieties, providing 'serious' material for versions presenting themselves as 'quality' TV. George Levine rather reductively describes 'the apparent moral simplicity of most modern versions of *Frankenstein*' compared with the novel (1979: 12) but we suggest it is precisely the story's moral ambiguity that appeals to adaptors and audiences. Moreover, the monster's capacity for pathos (based on Karloff's film performance rather than the novel) and the story's focus on the family (Victor as the monster's father, its threats to his loved ones) lend themselves to TV's capacity for melodrama.

The Dan Curtis production, broadcast in 1973 as part of ABC's *Wide World of Mystery*, may look disappointing to twenty-first-century eyes. As a TV movie from 'back in the days when actors and not special effects had to carry a piece' as one online review notes (Cullum 2007), it has restricted locations (the majority shot on sound stages), a low budget and static camerawork. Here, 'quality' inheres in the focus on ethical issues raised by the story. The first scene shows Victor Frankenstein in a heated debate about the 'mysteries of life' with colleagues at the University of Ingolstadt. The opening titles cite Shelley's novel and the epigraph from *Paradise Lost* that accompanied *Frankenstein*'s publication. Thus immediate action and drama (entertainment value) are offered alongside assurance that this is an adaptation of a serious literary work, a 'quality' production. We are plunged into Victor's obsession, made clear by his willingness to use the heart of colleague Hugo who is killed during an ill-fated grave robbing excursion to collect body parts. Characterization of the creation extrapolates other versions of the story. 'We thought he'd be

superhuman, Victor,' says assistant Otto uncertainly, 'he can't even speak.' Taking a perhaps more logical (scientific?) approach, the creature needs time to adapt to his new life because, 'He's a baby, a giant baby.' While this is implicit in other versions, here it crucially informs the portrayal of both the creature and Victor himself as sympathetic. Victor leaves Otto in charge of the lab and the creature, and the audience sees Otto start to teach the creature to walk, talk and 'play'. When this play has fatal results and the monster escapes, attention turns to Victor, whose guilt and anxieties about the safety of his loved ones prove well-founded. The 'horror' is that neither he nor his creation is fully to blame for the deaths that ensue, although their failure to communicate and admit their bond results in tragedy.

The Hallmark mini-series, from 2004, is even more faithful to Shelley's novel, including scenes that Lavalley claims are never part of adaptations (the hanging of servant Justine, the frame story with ship's captain Walton, the monster reading *Paradise Lost* and Plutarch, 1979: 246). Luke Goss plays one of the most articulate *Frankenstein* monsters: his lack of disfigurement and impassioned speeches encourage sympathy but make him less monstrous, losing a key component of the story. An overly sympathetic monster inspires little horror, only pity. The creation of the monster's mate does signal a return to horror: 'She is so beautiful', the creature says as the camera pans down her body on the slab only to abruptly reveal that there is no foot at the end of her leg. In addition, Victor's hallucinations construct a nightmarish doppelganger relationship between himself and his creature. Overall, though, the imperative of Hallmark's branding dictates that this is an adaptation for a mainstream audience. The channel describes itself as 'the quintessential 24-hour television destination for family-friendly programming and a leader in the production of original movies' (Hallmark Channel). As online reviewer Cullum concludes, 'If you have someone special in your life who detests horror movies, this is the version to show them' (2004).

Curtis's name guarantees that his production will be noted by horror fans; the Hallmark production characterizes itself as period drama and its British director Kevin Connor made his name in

historical mini-series and adaptations, including *North and South Book II* and *Great Expectations*. Despite its US origin, it consolidates conventions of UK heritage drama, outlined by Cardwell:

> high production values; 'authentic' detailed costumes and sets; 'great British actors'; light classical music; slow pace; steady, often symmetric framing; an interest in landscapes, buildings, and interiors as well as characters; strong, gradually developed protagonists accompanied by entertaining cameo roles; and intelligent 'faithful' dialogue (2007: 189).

Thus, its atmosphere of brooding darkness and horror is subordinate to epic sweep, a classical score, landscape and location shooting (in Slovakia), famous supporting actors (Donald Sutherland, William Hurt) and a lot of talking. These markers of quality promote the adaptation as a Hallmark production and as the channel increases its number of home-grown TV movies, adaptations abound, including *Snow Queen, Son of the Dragon* (which reimagines the *Arabian Nights*' '*Thief of Bagdad*'*), Merlin's Apprentice*, as well as *Blackbeard* and *The Curse of King Tut's Tomb*. These TV movies often feature as seasonal/ holiday offerings in the channel's annual calendar. The key descriptor here is 'family-friendly', and while heritage drama is often presented as grown-up entertainment, Hallmark's mission statement precludes the strong horror that might be deemed integral to *Frankenstein*.

Julie Sanders observes that adaptations may express a critical perspective, (such as a queer, feminist, or post-colonial view, 2006: 9) perhaps one not easily articulated at the time of the adapted text's production. The 2007 British ITV *Frankenstein* is a modernization which has Victoria Frankenstein as a scientist working on the 'Universal Xenograft' project. Press coverage at the time implies that the gender switch is mere novelty value (rather like Hammer's film *Dr Jekyll and Sister Hyde*) and, perhaps with an eye to a mainstream audience (UK viewing figures reached 3.6 million, Fitzsimmons 2007), this is not an overtly 'feminist' reinterpretation. Helen McCrory argues that her character differs from Victor in the novel, 'her creation is born out of an overriding concern for life and a desire to preserve and protect it, rather than as a result of a man with a God complex

stitching body parts together in the cellar' (McCrory 2007). The production focuses on what some consider the heart of Shelley's novel – birth and childcare (Ellen Moers in *Literary Women* called it 'a horror story of teenage motherhood,' quoted in Twitchell 1985: 175) and writer/director Jed Mercurio confesses, 'I was excited by a maternal relationship between Frankenstein and the Monster' (quoted in Gilbert 2007). Birth is a structuring element. A brief prologue introduces the theme of tragic overreaching, then onscreen titles take us back 'Nine months earlier' to unfold a story in which Victoria is estranged from her husband Henry, and her son William dies for lack of a suitable organ donor. This adaptation moves beyond using the gender switch merely for novelty, mining it for rich thematic material.

A mass of proper names in this production provide intertextual references to Shelley's novel and Whale's Universal films. Victoria's supervisors are Prof. Andrew Waldman and Prof. Jane Pretorius, her lab assistant is named Ed Gore, the company her husband works for is Clerval Biotechnology, we see signs for the 'Windmill Research Project,' and a generator on the roof of the building casts windmill-like shadows on the action.[9] While some of these references are less subtle than others (the monster is trapped in a burning windmill at the end of Whale's film; in the novel Henry Clerval is Victor's boyhood friend), all demonstrate the 'sense of play that many theorists have stressed as central to the adaptive instinct' (Sanders 2006: 7) and are likely to be recognized by viewers who know both the novel and the films. Panoramic views of heavy clouds moving at unnatural speed (visually alluding to Whale's *Frankenstein*) are juxtaposed with extreme close-ups of the project showing blood and, later, organic objects that may be teeth. The scientific workspaces are industrial and dark rather than gleaming and hygienic (it was filmed in a decommissioned hospital); the lab is filled with shadows. All these characteristics announce the adaptation as horror without being too graphic, and Mercurio admits reservations about contemporaneous gory horror, such as the *Saw* and *Hostel* series (see Gilbert 2007),

implying that he maintains good taste and appeals to a different demographic.

In keeping with this careful negotiation, the creature is first presented through point-of-view shots, frequently associated with the slasher movie. Scenes showing it interacting with a girl reference the most infamous scene in Whale's film (where the monster mistakenly kills a child) as well as offering graphic horror through the clearly audible snapping of the child's neck and close-up shots of her body being bagged and removed. When Victoria finds the creature lurking in her garden, it is shown in part rather than whole – glimpses of feet, hand, mouth suggest rather than specify horror. From the point where the creature starts attacking people, however, the production changes its approach, fully displaying the creature's uncanny relation to the 'normal' human form by dwelling on its embryo-like features. Thus, executive producer Tim Haines (known for the acclaimed *Walking with Dinosaurs*), highlights cutting edge TV effects as a kind of 'quality' and part of this *Frankenstein*'s distinctiveness. 'Our experience with creating CGI monsters has enabled us to bring to life Shelley's horrific creation as never seen before' (*Frankenstein* 2007). In the closing scenes, horror shifts to the treatment of the creature (and of Victoria and Henry) by the scientific and military establishment funding the project. Positioning Victoria as a repentant mother and the creature as a curious, mute child (she introduced her son's DNA into the project), demands sympathy for them despite their actions. The production ends with Victoria and the creature forced into more testing, extending one aspect of the novel by leaving the two suspended in mutual dependence.

Moving yet further from the novel, *The X-Files*' 'The Postmodern Prometheus' and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*'s 'Some Assembly Required' appropriate the Frankenstein story into their existing narrative structures. Both adapt the material in self-conscious ways as per 'quality' serial TV drama: *Buffy* narratively, *The X-Files* stylistically.

'Some Assembly Required' relocates the action to Sunnydale High School and sees Buffy and friends investigate a grave robbing. The Frankenstein scenario is taken for granted – two science

whizzes are collecting parts to build a girl. The gang discovers a cut-up collage of the girl in a school locker, an image that manages the 'horror' of *Frankenstein* in keeping with a teen story on US network TV. A close-up of the diced and reconstructed body image, graphic in its own way, dissolves into the body of the 'bride' covered by a sheet, imposing the collage onto the 'real', barely-discerned shape. Later the sheet is lifted to show the body to another character but we see only her terrified reaction. Rather than focusing on graphic horror, the familiar story foregrounds the emotional realism common in 'quality' fantasy TV. Science geek Chris's motivation is love. His elder brother Daryl was killed in an accident and Chris revived him after death, telling Buffy that he wanted to 'look out for' his brother, as former football star Daryl had always done for him. 'Everybody loved him', Chris says, explaining Daryl's desire for a mate, 'and now he's all alone'. When Buffy visits the family home, Chris's mother is more like a zombie than the resurrected Daryl. Smoking and watching videotapes of his past glories on the football field, she grieves for her dead son and ignores his surviving sibling. If *Frankenstein* is about a failure to take responsibility for creating life, the *Buffy* episode shows Chris trying to keep the family together in the absence of meaningful parental action, in keeping with the series' theme of generational conflict in early seasons. His youthful inexperience leads to tragedy: not only is Chris unable to reveal Daryl's resurrection to his mother, but Daryl and conspirator Eric force him to snatch cheerleader Cordelia to complete Daryl's companion. Buffy saves the day, of course, and Daryl perishes in the makeshift laboratory.

The plot is predictable, offering the pleasure of repetition; the drama meditates on family love and responsibility. As Buffy later comments, 'the whole thing was so creepy. Well, at the same time, I mean, he did do it all for his brother', the best of intentions turned to horror and tragedy because 'love makes you do the wacky'. This theme ties into various levels of narrative such as the romance blossoming between mentor Giles and teacher Jenny Calendar, as well as tensions between Buffy and vampire boyfriend Angel, which take a dark turn later in this season when Angel loses his soul and reverts to evil killer Angelus. The dangers of resurrection return too,

after the death of Buffy's mother Joyce in Season 5 ('Forever' 5.17) and then with full force in Season 6 when Buffy's friends bring her back from the dead, with dark consequences, making this episode particularly resonant for the overall series narrative.

The X-Files' 'The Post-modern Prometheus' likewise assumes that viewers know the Frankenstein story. This is not a typical *X-Files* episode, departing aesthetically from the show's distinctive style in almost every way (writer and director Chris Carter comments, it's 'something we'd never done on *The X-Files* before', 2007). Filmed in black and white, and shot with wide-angle lenses, the episode's style is at times surreal, at others 'cartoony' and brings out what Carter calls 'the fairy tale quality of the story'. Of seven Emmy Award nominations, it won Outstanding Art Direction. In this sense it offers both 'critique and re-evaluation' (of its own context) as well as 'stylistic mimicry or pastiche' of its 'originals', as Sanders argues adaptations often do (2006: 123), picking out style as a measure of quality. Blurring the boundaries of reality and fantasy allows Carter to 'do' *Frankenstein* without compromising the bleak, more grounded world the show usually presents. In the episode, Scully and Mulder investigate the mysterious impregnation of a small-town single mother, Shaineh Berkowitz, supposedly by a mysterious being, later revealed to be the creation of a Frankenstein-like figure, Dr Pollidori. 'Mulder, I'm alarmed that you would reduce this man to a literary stereotype, a mad scientist', says Scully, as the episode winks broadly to the viewer (see Fig. 4.1).

4.1 ‘The Post-modern Prometheus’ The X-Files (5.5)

Like other *Frankenstein* adaptations, it includes references for knowing viewers: the title reworks Shelley’s subtitle, ‘The Modern Prometheus’ and Dr Pollidori [sic][10] tells Mulder and Scully that he has to ‘travel tonight to the University of Ingolstadt’. The episode’s stylistic and narrative choices combine familiar elements of the story with other areas of pop culture in unexpected ways. Black and white film stock suggests variously 1930s movies, 1950s sitcoms and comic book illustration. The weird tales that Shaineh’s teenage son, Izzy Berkowitz, writes for his comic book creation ‘The Great Mutato’ are layered with the bizarre ‘real life’ stories his mother watches on *The Jerry Springer Show* (Springer appears as himself), and resonate also as the type of stories common on *The X-Files*. A more typically *X-Files* scientific explanation of genetic experimentation on fly species[11] sits alongside the fairytale story of the ‘original’ of Izzy’s Great Mutato, the mysterious being created by Dr Pollidori.

The climactic scene, where a mob of angry townsfolk converge on the Great Mutato, invokes the pathos of the monster seen in other versions, yet reverses the usual outcome as Mutato tells his story of loss and alienation and wins over the mob. Matt Hills suggests that horror on TV sometimes uses ‘programmed anachronism’ (2005a: 122) to make its horror safe for a mainstream audience, distancing

the world of the story from that of the viewer. 'The Post-modern Prometheus' demonstrates this, but its out-of-time styling also enhances the 'fairy tale' ending. Mulder complains, 'Dr Frankenstein pays for his evil ambitions, yes. But the monster's supposed to escape to go search for his bride', and asks to see the 'writer' – just as Izzy appears. The finale takes the characters to a live Cher concert. Mulder and Scully dance together while Mutato is picked out of the crowd to join his hero onstage. Here, programmed anachronism results not only in an affectionate pastiche of old Frankenstein movies, but also in more emotion than the bleak, noir-ish *X-Files* usually allows itself, including, as Carter admits, one of the 'most touching scenes we've ever done' (2007). Using a well-known 'horror' story, it offers a respite from the 'real' and often unresolved horrors the series usually presents, and showcases its ability to produce artistic, aesthetically interesting TV by diverging from its established style.

KING OF TV HORROR

> The ideal writer for the TV medium is a fella or a gal with a smidgen of talent, a lot of gall, and the soul of a drone (King 1981: 252).
>
> When they come to a mini-series, viewers are more willing to sit down and allow the story to evolve around them, whereas in a movie it's got to be *pow* (King quoted in Rowe 1999: 37).

Stephen King is renowned for having declared the horror genre and television incompatible bedfellows. Writing in 1981, his primary complaint was that censorship restrictions imposed upon network television, dictating precisely what the horror creator can do or show, negate the possibility of horror. More importantly, he argued that television itself, the product of 'drones', was far too bland to be an arena for horror. Television, he explained, reassures audiences rather than unsettles them: '[t]he idea of TV at that time was to soothe you, to tranquilize, to give you *Seinfeld* or *Cheers* and things like that,' he says, 'Things that didn't upset you very much' (quoted in Pendleton

2002: 32). While his arguments are often cited as conveying an antipathy toward TV horror, his comments are far more critical of television itself.

Despite this fact, his name has, in recent years, become indelibly linked to TV horror. The first TV adaptation of his work, *Salem's Lot*, was produced in 1979 and since then his works have proved popular with television producers. His novels have been turned into mini-series (*Salem's Lot* [1979/2004], *It, The Stand, The Shining, Tommyknockers, Desperation*), while his short stories have been adapted into TV movies (*Sometimes They Come Back*, *Carrie*) and episodes for anthology series such as *The Outer Limits* and *Tales from the Darkside*. His collection of short stories *Nightmares and Dreamscapes* was the primary source for the anthology horror series of the same name (although not all episodes were taken from King's work), while his novel *The Dead Zone* was adapted into a series in 2002 that ran for six seasons. Furthermore, King's own attitudes have changed since his memorable attack on television, and now he often prefers to see his work adapted to the small screen rather than for the cinema. While he acknowledges intense negotiations with networks about what they can or will show on television continue, the shift from a three network system, each vying for the highest possible ratings, to a multi-channel broadcast landscape means that networks and cable channels have relaxed their restrictions, creating greater potential for horror. Any discussion of TV horror, therefore, would be incomplete without consideration of how the adaptation of King's work to television impacts upon our understanding of TV horror.

Stephen King is the mainstream face of the horror genre. An internationally bestselling author, 30 of his novels have made it to number one on the *New York Times* Best Seller List (Hawes Publications 2011). Similarly, adaptations of his work for television have, with few exceptions, been broadcast on a major American network and have generated sufficiently high ratings for him to have creative control over his projects (Pendleton 2002: 31–32). King prefers working with the networks, usually ABC with whom he has 'developed a wonderful working relationship … over the years' (King 1999: x). While he acknowledges that he would be given greater

freedom if he worked with one of the smaller subscription cable channels, such as HBO, Showtime or AMC, he notes that they reach comparatively small audiences: 'Doing a mini on HBO would be like publishing a major novel with a small press. I have nothing at all against either small presses or cable TV, but if I work hard over a long period of time, I'd like a shot at the largest possible audience' (King 1999: xii).

As a result King presents us with a conundrum. The horror genre is generally perceived to appeal to a niche market for, as Robin Wood has argued, horror is one of 'the most disreputable' of genres, appealing largely to teenagers or aficionados (1986: 77). Yet, King's books and TV mini-series reach millions of readers and viewers and are forms of blockbuster horror. Adapting his work to network television counters the argument that horror is niche by providing a self-contained horror franchise that is easily marketable to the masses. As Tony Magistrale has argued, 'King appears to be one of the few writers in America whose name is infinitely more important, in terms of popular identification, than any of the individual titles from his canon' (2003: 175). For King, television provides space for his stories to unfold as he envisioned them, as he explains, 'the network giveth and the network taketh away … what it giveth is time' (2003). King has been both criticized and praised for the length and general sprawl of his novels, and the TV mini-series can capture their intricacy and detail (Magistrale 1988: 12).

Television also provided King with authorial control on projects like *The Stand* and *The Shining*, where he adapted his own novels and served as executive producer. This reaffirms notions of authorial authenticity usually ascribed to adaptation and many of the miniseries were retitled to include King's name: *Stephen King's It, Stephen King's The Stand, Stephen King's The Shining* and *Stephen King's Desperation.* This is particularly significant with respect to *The Shining*, previously adapted for cinema by Stanley Kubrick. King was unhappy with Kubrick's approach, and titling the mini-series *Stephen King's The Shining* distinguishes it from Kubrick's film and signals to the audience that this will be an *authentic* version of the novel.

Furthermore, notions of authenticity with respect to King serve a somewhat different role than with regard to writers of classic gothic literature such as Stoker, Shelley and Stevenson. It does suggest the primacy of the original text as in these other examples but with classic literature authenticity also alludes to the quality of the original. They must be adapted faithfully because they are literary classics. King, in contrast, is generally perceived as a writer of mainstream novels, a key popular culture figure but not a writer of 'great literature'. In his case, the promise of fidelity to the original text is the promise of horror, as demonstrated by the trailer for *The Shining* which declares: 'from Stephen King the creator of *It*, *The Tommyknockers* and *The Stand* comes a completely new vision of terror', highlighting King's reputation as a horror writer as well as the string of successful mini-series produced and broadcast on ABC. This promise of a 'new vision of terror' does not sit well, however, with King's blockbuster status. As Stacey Abbott has argued with respect to cinema, for horror to generate blockbuster sales it can 'only be one of many genre influences. The attempt to appeal to general audiences … results in horror no longer being the priority but simply one way of reading and responding to the experience' (2010a: 41). While his stories often have a supernatural underpinning and can generate unease, disgust and terror, King is also a raconteur of small-town American life, both celebrating and critiquing its internal dynamics. As Magistrale argues of *Salem's Lot*, 'the gothic elements in King's novel – vampire, ghosts, a haunted house – serve to highlight and comment on the distinctly human terrors that pervade the town' (2003: 183–84). We argue therefore that King's novels create his own genre, a combination of horror, American gothic and New England folk fiction.

While clearly marketed as horror, the TV adaptations share King's unique generic hybridity, enabling Mark Browning to argue that 'the term "a Stephen King adaptation" becomes a generic label in itself – with potential overtones of science fiction and horror but often only tangentially delivering those elements' (2011: 9). Despite his initial objections to horror on television, King's work has proved ideally suited to mainstream television because its hybridity already

downplays the horror. That is not to diminish his work but rather to suggest that the genre of Stephen King is more gothic than horror, more suggestive than graphic, and more character-than action-based.

As an illustration, we consider one particular aspect of King's work. King explains that one of the most 'stringent Standards and Practices rule[s]' in operation within network television 'is that TV dramas must not be built upon the premise of children in mortal jeopardy, let alone dying' (1999: xiii). Children in peril is, however, a recurring theme within horror, from classic fairy tales such as *Hansel and Gretel* to contemporary horror films like William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* and Joe Dante's *The Hole.* It is also a significant trope within King's works. These narratives play out universal anxieties about child abuse but also provide a space for children to overcome their fears. Many of King's protagonists are children who, whether under attack from vampires or the unnamed monster living in the sewers, are repeatedly placed in peril. They are simultaneously placed in positions of power since it is left to the children to save themselves, and the adults around them. After the Glick brothers die at the hands of the vampire Mr Barlow in *Salem's Lot*, their friend Mark Petrie avenges their deaths by going after the vampire. The Losers' Club are repeatedly attacked by It but only they can stop It from killing more children as their parents cannot see the evil in their midst. Furthermore, when they return to Derry as adults, they are only able to destroy It after remembering and re-experiencing their childhood.

These narratives raise interesting challenges for televisual adaptation. The novel *It*, for instance, begins with the murder of a six-year-old child, Georgie Denborough by Pennywise the clown, who represents the perversion of childhood innocence and embodies childhood nightmares. This event leads to a series of unsolved child murders but, more than a story about a child-killer, this book chronicles the slow terrorising of a group of pre-teen geeks and losers over one long summer in 1957 by It, a monster embodying the rational and irrational fears of youth. A difficult story to adapt for television, it was the first of ABC's successful King mini-series. The mini-series maintains the death of Georgie as the catalyst for the

unfolding story, and actually begins with two child-murders; one – Laurie Anne – in the present and one – Georgie – in the past, clearly establishing from the outset that this evil is recurring and insatiable. In King's novel, Georgie's death is described in gruesome detail, emphasizing the 'ripping' of Georgie's arm from his body, the 'bright red' blood on his yellow raincoat, and the 'knob of bone, horribly bright, peek[ing] through the torn cloth' (1986: 27). In contrast, the mini-series shows neither children's deaths. Instead we see Laurie Anne's overturned tricycle, wheels still spinning, and a doll strewn on the lawn before her mother turns to look off-screen and screams. This omission does not diminish the horror of these scenes but instead captures the 'deplorable and tragic reality of child abuse' that is at the heart of King's novel (Skal 1993: 361).

To achieve this, emphasis is placed upon the predatory nature of Pennywise. As Laurie Anne comes home to escape the coming storm and finds a doll on her walkway, children's laughter, along with the throaty chuckle of a male voice, is heard off-screen, causing her to look for the source. The use of off-screen space implies a hidden threat, reinforced by the fact that Laurie Anne only catches a glimpse of Pennywise, smiling at her from behind sheets hanging from the clothesline. The innocence of this moment is undermined by the way it is bookended by two shots from Pennywise' point of view as he peers at Laurie Anne through the sheets. The second shot is even more unsettling because it is filmed in slow motion and, after a brief cutaway to the now snarling face of the clown, the camera tracks forward toward the girl as her smile slips and the scene fades to black.

Similarly Georgie's encounter with Pennywise is disconcerting, not because he unexpectedly finds a clown speaking to him from inside a storm drain – from a child's imaginative perspective this is only slightly unusual – but rather because it echoes every parent's fear of predatory strangers masked as friends and promising cotton candy, toys and balloons. When Georgie asks if the balloons float, Pennywise utters each word slowly and with an air of sexual pleasure as he tells Georgie: 'oh yes … they float … Georgie. They float', before aggressively asserting 'And when you are down there with me,

you'll float too' as he grabs for the boy. This time the camera zooms in on the clown's gaping maw before dissolving to Georgie's closed coffin. The absence of detail about exactly what Pennywise has done to Georgie is disturbing and the implications of the final shot open up myriad gruesome possibilities.

In this manner the TV mini-series displaces the horror onto something else as King explains: 'when the TV censor takes those scares away it becomes necessary to think of other routes to the same goal. The filmmaker becomes subversive, and sometimes the filmmaker becomes actually elegant' (1999: xii). Furthermore, the mini-series maintains the darkness of King's vision by remaining true to the lightness within his novel. As one *Newsweek* review said, 'the exciting and absorbing parts of *It* are not the mechanical showdowns and shockeroos … but the simple scenes in which King evokes childhood in the fifties' (quoted in Skal 1993: 364). The mini-series includes numerous uncanny moments, such as Pennywise confronting the children from within a nineteenth-century photograph, bursts of blood from drains, or balloons that only our child protagonists see, but other moments highlight the power of friendship and the wonder of childhood. When Bill Denborough, Georgie's brother and the leader of the Losers' Club, returns home after the murders start again, he and friend Mike Hanlon recapture their youth by cavorting on Bill's old bicycle, performing games and stunts in the playground, intercut with shots of their younger selves doing the same, to the energetic beat of The Temptations' 'The Way You do the Things you Do'. This respite from horror is a reminder of what they are there to protect. Furthermore, while the novel and mini-series present a narrative about children in peril, the Losers' Club's decision to fight the monster empowers children to confront their worst fears – whether they be clowns, the wolfman, school bullies or an abusive father – and in so doing *It* reassures as much as it unsettles. Here the genre of Stephen King presents a tapestry of childhood experiences including both wonders and nightmares, offering a balance between light and dark ideally suited to mainstream television horror.

While *It* captures King's nostalgia for small-town life and childhood, fidelity to King's original text can produce a very different

type of television horror. As a fan of the novel *The Shining*, Mick Garris felt it was his responsibility as director of the mini-series, adapted and produced by King, to 'actually do the book', something he felt was not achieved by Kubrick's adaptation, which also attracted King's dissatisfaction (2003).[12] Garris, a self-confessed King fan and a repeated King collaborator, takes a very traditional view of adaptation and is, therefore, 'faithful' to King's novel but in so doing he prioritizes family drama over the conventions of horror. Broadcast over three nights, the series follows Jack Torrance's gradual deterioration from troubled, alcoholic, but loving father to a violent, possessed man who beats his wife and threatens to murder his son. The performances of Steven Weber as Jack and Rebecca Demornay as his wife Wendy, express the nuances of a family living with alcoholism based upon the personal experiences that informed King's novel (King 2003). But it does this at the expense of the horror aesthetics seen in *It*. While the mini-series maintains the supernatural backdrop, including spectres, ghosts, and a haunted topiary, the ghosts and the hotel seem incidental, serving primarily as catalysts for Jack's breakdown. The series lacks the lighting and *mise-en-scène* of horror as well as any sense of dread or the uncanny. Garris includes low angle shots of the hotel, dark brewing clouds that suggest a storm is imminent and a plethora of computer-generated ghosts, but the hotel is primarily the sprawling domestic setting for a family drama. Moments of horror in the mini-series are therefore driven by Weber's performance as Jack gradually loses his mind and tries to kill his son. The scene in which Jack attacks Wendy with a croquet mallet is brutal as he hits her with full force on the knee and in the stomach, while threatening to kill her and their son – 'first the whiner and then the whelp'. The way he accuses Wendy of bringing the violence on herself is consistent with domestic abuse: 'Daddy's mad at mommy. Daddy finally got tired of listening to her faithless, hateful, spiteful, cowardly nagging and decided to take her to school'. Later Jack stalks Danny through the hotel corridors, his face covered in blood, eyes wild, smashing the walls and furniture with the croquet mallet while parroting his own father: 'You've done something wrong

and I want you to come here and take your medicine like a man … Soon as begun, soon as done.' These scenes are realistically portrayed and harrowing to watch. While Jack is presented as possessed by the spirits of the hotel, the implication is that the spirits bring out something latent within Jack. Possession serves as a metaphor for alcoholism – a disease that does seem to possess its sufferers – and as a result these scenes convey the horror of real domestic violence.

The family under attack is a recurring theme within horror and according to Tony Williams many horror films, particularly from the 1970s 'questioned the very nature of the nuclear family and implicitly (though never coherently) argued for a new form of society' (1996: 164). Similarly, Patricia Brett Erens argues that there is a sub-genre of horror films that 'addresses the dark side of family life and small-town America' by 'foregounding patriarchal power but positing the maternal order in opposition to the destructive elements of patriarchy' (1996: 354). *Stephen King's The Shining* operates on this level and the monstrous and bloodied Jack looming over his wife and later his son is a frightening image of fatherhood (see Fig. 4.2). Furthermore, Wendy's resistance to Jack's abuse, as well as Danny's circumvention of his father's attacks, suggest an alternative power within the family. This critique of patriarchy, however, is somewhat undermined by the mini-series' (and novel's) resolution in which Jack recovers his senses sufficiently to allow his family to escape before he destroys himself and the hotel. Jack's self-sacrifice reasserts his patriarchal authority and reassures the audience that family ideals remain intact. Despite this reassuring ending, however, the mini-series, over its three-evening broadcast, presents a disturbing picture of family that contrasts the traditional representation of fatherhood and domestic life still fairly common on television. King explains that his role models, the TV fathers of *Father Knows Best* and *Leave it to Beaver*, left him unprepared for the rage he sometimes felt toward his children (quoted in Rogak 2009: 79), a subject he explores in this novel and mini-series. *Stephen King's The Shining* is thus a form of TV horror that functions as horror because it challenges the primacy of family and home long upheld by television.

4.2 Jack in *The Shining*

Not all TV adaptations of King's work prioritize fidelity. Tobe Hooper's 1979 mini-series *Salem's Lot* draws significantly from the director's horror background, and in so doing creates a form of TV horror that is a hybrid of televisual and cinematic style. King's position as a mainstream horror franchise, however, has led to the development of a genre of Stephen King which has been ideal for network TV, attracting large audiences that few horror writers except King could generate. In this manner, the notion of adaptation is as much about marketing as it is about the text.

ANTHOLOGIES AND ADAPTATION

King's blockbuster horror stands in contrast to the way anthology shows have traditionally used adaptation. Short stories in particular afford ready-made material but these stories are sold to the audience via the show, not through the appeal of the 'original' or the name of the writer. A horror anthology show like *The Twilight Zone* acknowledged the value and skill of its writers (as analysed in the next chapter), and its writers adapted short stories, sometimes their own, for television. Yet such adaptation had to fit the show's overall remit and its resolutely contemporary approach to horror and the unknown. This was an ideal forum for a consciously populist writer like Richard Matheson (a forerunner to King). Matheson wrote 16 episodes for *The Twilight Zone*, the psychological horror 'Nightmare

at 20,000 Feet' adapted from his own short story, being the most famous. 'An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge' is a celebrated but much more unusual episode, adapted from the Ambrose Bierce story as a French short film (*La Rivière du Hibou*), which was a winner at Cannes in 1962. (The same story had also been adapted for *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* in 1959.) It features an introduction by Rod Serling explaining its origins and was atypical for being a period drama. Despite the period setting, realism enhances the horror of the hanging at the centre of the action, through close attention to detail of the material, physical world, especially sound. Serling's subsequent anthology show, *Night Gallery*, often used short stories by well-known horror writers such as H. P. Lovecraft (e.g. 'Cool Air'), Algernon Blackwood ('The Doll') and August Derleth (e.g. 'House With Ghost'). The celebrated 'Silent Snow, Secret Snow' episode (broadcast in 1971) 'brings to life a literary classic' by Conrad Aiken, as Serling's introduction puts it. It achieved its effect by sticking closely to the story, with an atmospheric voice-over from Orson Welles creating a sense of eerie dislocation. As the story's protagonist, young Paul, becomes increasingly detached from the world around him, the narrator describes his interior thoughts but maintains a distance from them, and the TV adaptation visualizes how those around Paul become increasingly concerned with his retreat into fantasy. Paul daydreams about snow and the closing shot of the episode simply shows shadow covering his face as he succumbs to his mysterious fantasy.

The more recent *Masters of Horror* also uses a number of adaptations. While these are advertised as such on the DVD packaging, they are often updated and expanded, as with the Bierce story 'The Damned Thing' mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, or the H. P. Lovecraft story 'Dreams in the Witchhouse', which is given a contemporary setting. Season 2 also includes 'The Black Cat', a version of Edgar Allan Poe's story that renders Poe himself as a character, alluding to the writer's biography as well as his reputation as a classic writer of horror. *MoH* draws from recent genre writing too. 'Haeckel's Tale', based on a Clive Barker story, is set in period (or an undisclosed era), though this does little to

distance the viewer from its graphic negotiation of sexuality and violence. Both ‘Haeckel’s Tale’ and ‘Dreams in the Witchhouse’ fit the *MoH* remit by focusing on taboo elements and graphic horror (necrophilia and baby killing, respectively). The information in the DVD sets assume such writers, whether classic or popular, are known to the horror fan likely to be watching the show and buying the DVD. Links to the horror writers of older anthology shows are made apparent by the inclusion of ‘Dance of the Dead’, a Richard Matheson story adapted by his son, Richard Christian Matheson. Thus, while the draw of *MoH* is nominally its ‘master’ directors, and fans might be watching ‘Dance of the Dead’ to see Tobe Hooper’s contribution to the show, *MoH* does not neglect to build a lineage of horror writing, literary and televisual, into its formula. Issues of authorship in *MoH* and other TV horror are explored more fully in the next chapter.

5. The Horror Auteur

> Thirteen smart scary stories presented by the directors who have already given names and faces to the creatures that haunt our dreams. All hail the masters.
>
> Directors' Preview for *Masters of Horror*

> The pitch was rather simple. The guys with the greatest history of creating some of our richest and most fearful nightmares making individual one hour movies, with all the rule breaking that that entails. The best guys in the world doing the scariest films the way they want to do it.
>
> Mick Garris, Executive Producer of *Masters of Horror*
> (quoted in the Directors' Preview for *MoH*)

In 2005, the American cable channel Showtime launched *Masters of Horror (MoH),* hailed as an unprecedented televisual foray into the horror genre. An anthology series aimed at horror fans and broadcast on a pay TV channel, this show was designed to push the boundaries of TV horror. Premium cable channel HBO had previously produced *Tales from the Crypt*, based upon the EC horror comics, aiming to exploit HBO's freedom from FCC regulations and represent graphic violence, sex and gore. What distinguishes the two shows, however, is *MoH*'s pulling together leading directors of cinematic horror. While *Tales from the Crypt* – produced by filmmakers Richard Donner, Walter Hill and Robert Zemekis – attracted a wide selection of celebrity directors, including Michael J. Fox, Tom Hanks, Arnold Schwarzenegger, John Frankenheimer, Tobe Hooper and William

Friedkin, with the exception of Hooper and Friedkin they were not horror directors. Executive producer Donner directed classic horror film *The Omen*, yet is most associated with comedy action films like *Superman, The Goonies* and *Lethal Weapon.*

In contrast, *MoH* is predicated upon uniting leading horror directors to create frightening and innovative programmes, starting with the directors credited with revitalizing the genre in the 1970s and 1980s George Romero, Wes Craven, Tobe Hooper, John Carpenter, Dario Argento, John Landis, Joe Dante and Stuart Gordon.[13] Added to these were more contemporary figures such as Tod Holland, Takeshi Miike and Rob Schmidt. These directors have devoted the majority of their careers to the horror genre, and have become horror icons, regularly appearing at international horror festivals and on the covers of leading horror publications such as *Fangoria, Shivers* and *Cinefantastique.* Furthermore, most are perceived as connoisseurs and cinephiles, knowledgeable about the history of the genre and developments within its contemporary landscape, something *MoH* wove into its marketing. By tapping this legacy, *MoH* targeted a niche audience, promising cutting-edge horror never before seen on television.

The series also tapped into the film studies conception of authorship, awarding these directors horror auteur status. The notion of the auteur was developed in the 1950s and 1960s by critics and filmmakers seeking to legitimize cinema, recasting it as a personal, expressive art form as opposed to a purely commercial industry (see Caughie 1981). This concept became an accepted, if still debated, approach to studying cinema. As indicated by executive producer Mick Garris' comments cited at the start of this chapter, *MoH* promised that each director would have *free rein* to make the *scariest movies,* breaking the rules the way *they* want to. Garris emphasizes creative freedom and personal expression, key components of authorship. However, *MoH* engages with a largely cinematic understanding of the auteur. Within film studies, the director is usually seen as the galvanizing, creative force and is therefore attributed auteur status. In television, a director usually adheres to a pre-

determined series style and consequently has little control over the final product. Garris rarely discussed *MoH* as television, referring instead to each episode as a movie and describing the series as 'director-driven and director-oriented' (quoted in Van Buskirk 2005a: 12), emphasizing each unique vision. 'We want them to be as different as possible. We don't want Tobe Hooper's to look like Dario Argento's; we don't want those to look like John Carpenter's' (quoted in Van Buskirk 2005b: 38). This series highlights diversity and multiplicity, based upon the director's stylistic preferences. While Don Coscarelli's 'Incident On and Off a Mountain Road' (1.1) is, according to Garris, 'real balls-to-the-wall, go-for-the-throat horror' (quoted in Van Buskirk 2005b: 40), John Landis' 'Deer Woman' (1.7) offers his iconic mix of horror-comedy, Joe Dante's 'Homecoming' (1.6) is a political zombie-satire on war, and Dario Argento's 'Pelts' (2.6) is the 'wet-episode' from Season 2 ('Fleshing it Out'). Furthermore, the limited budgets and time constraints imposed by working in television were highlighted as a return to each director's low budget, independent cinema origins (Van Buskirk 2005b: 40).

Television studies has resisted adopting the auteur theory, preferring to examine the medium's place within popular culture and the broadcast landscape.[14] Yet emerging debates about 'quality' television have established auteurism as a significant strand, and authorship is now being used to legitimize television as more than commercial, mainstream fare. Even within the industry, authorship connotes quality for, as Janet McCabe and Kim Akass argue, 'American broadcasters are once again emphasizing the importance of authoring as a means of distinguishing their products from regular TV' (2007: 9-10). One of Robert J. Thompson's criteria for quality television is that it must be 'literary and writer-based' (1996: 15) while Máire Messenger-Davies argues for the 'centrality of the writer' in television 'because the script is the one irreducible currency of value (both commercial and aesthetic) in film and television production' (2007: 173). Roberta Pearson claims that 'the transformation of the industry resulted in the television writer-producer, or hyphenate in *Variety*-speak, playing a much more prominent role in the industry

than previously' (2005: 11). The writer-producer is highly visible, with an increasing degree of creative freedom and 'functions as a protector, guarantor and organizer of quality in the post-network post-1996 television age' (McCabe and Akass 2007: 9).

With the exception of Joss Whedon (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Angel*), writer/producers who specialize in TV horror are rarely included in debates about 'quality' because of the genre's association with low culture. The TV horror auteur has, however, long been a notable presence. The horror genre has an extensive auteurist tradition dating back to gothic writers like Mary Shelley, Robert Louis Stevenson and Bram Stoker. Within cinema, this notion extends to the studio signatures of Universal's 1930s horror films and 1960s Hammer Horror films; Val Lewton as producer auteur in the 1940s; and auteur directors, such as James Whale, Jacques Tourneur, George Romero or David Cronenberg. Television has similarly produced highly innovative artists who have worked largely in horror and whose auteur status, like the *MoH* directors, is based upon their contribution to developing the genre on television. Moreover, while contemporary discourses around the TV auteur have fixated upon the writer-producer, the TV Horror auteur fills a multitude of roles including writer, producer, director and host. For instance, director Kim Manners is a horror auteur because of his substantial contribution to both *The X-Files* and *Supernatural*, establishing both series' iconic horror visuals. Similarly, the League of Gentlemen, comprised of Mark Gatiss, Steve Pemberton, Reece Shearsmith and Jeremy Dyson, make a significant contribution to TV horror as writers, producers *and* performers (see Chapter 7).

Writer/producer/director Dan Curtis, while perhaps remembered by some for directing epic World War II mini-series *The Winds of War* and *War and Remembrance*, is a leading horror auteur of American television. While Curtis had success in the cinema, particularly with *House of Dark Shadows* and *Burnt Offerings,* his greatest achievements are televisual, beginning with the daytime gothic soap *Dark Shadows*. He produced and/or directed 12 horror TV movies between 1968 and 1996, and in 1991 he revived *Dark Shadows* as a prime-time soap (with a further revival attempted in 2006). The

quantity of his televisual output alone positions Curtis, straddling the creative positions of producer-writer-director like the hyphenates who dominate contemporary American television, as a significant horror producer of the mid to late twentieth century and his work had huge impact. At its peak, *Dark Shadows* attracted 20 million viewers and fostered a fan community that rivals *Star Trek*. *The Night Stalker* is one of the most successful TV movies ever, earning 'a 33.2 rating and a 54 share, representing 75 million viewers' (Thompson 2009: 113). Curtis's adaptations of gothic literature, including *Dracula, Frankenstein* and *Turn of the Screw*, were well received by critics, while the episode 'Amelia' of his portmanteau film *Trilogy of Terror*, in which a Zuni fetish doll comes to life, has influenced films such as *Gremlins, Small Soldiers* and *Child's Play*, as well as British television series *Psychoville.*

The following case studies therefore explore key aspects of the horror auteur on television, first focusing upon writer-producer Rod Serling's role of horror host in both *The Twilight Zone* and *Night Gallery*. We then consider how writer Nigel Kneale's work shaped the face of British TV horror, followed by an examination of the emerging contribution to TV horror from critically acclaimed contemporary writer-producer Steven Moffat. The chapter concludes by returning to *MoH*, to consider how cinematic auteurs contribute to our understanding of horror for television.

All hail the masters.

THE FACE OF TV HORROR

> There is a fifth dimension beyond that which is known to man. It is a dimension as vast as space, as timeless as infinity. It is the middle ground between light and shadow, between science and superstition, and it lies between the pit of man's fears and the summit of his knowledge. This is the dimension of imagination. It is an area we call *The Twilight Zone*.
>
> Rod Serling, Introduction to *The Twilight Zone*

> We welcome you, ladies and gentlemen, to an exhibit of art, a collection of oils and still-lifes that share one thing in common. You won't find them in the

average salon or exhibition hall or art museum.

Rod Serling, Introduction to 'The Dead Man' *Night Gallery*

The horror host guiding the audience through a series of horror tales is an established genre tradition, featuring in radio programmes – *The Inner Sanctum Mysteries*; comics – *Tales from the Crypt*; and cinema – *Dr Terror's House of Horrors*. Television historically used hosts to present classic horror movies for late-night broadcast. Vampira, a buxom woman in a low-cut Morticia Addams-style dress, was the first, introducing old horror movies on KABC in Los Angeles from 1954–55. Immortalized in Ed Wood's *Plan 9 from Outer Space,* and replicated in the 1980s by Elvira Mistress of the Dark, she remains one of the most iconic. In 1957 Universal Studios released a package of their classic horror films, including *Dracula, Frankenstein,* and *Son of Frankenstein* for broadcast on television under the title *Shock!* The package (also known as Shock Theatre) encouraged buyers to have 'macabre masters of ceremonies' introduce the films. As Elena M. Watson has shown, 'after the success of *Shock!*, local TV horror-movie hosts sprang up everywhere' (1991: 22). These hosts, often dressed in gothic costumes and carrying monstrous monikers like Gorgon the Grusesome, Morgos the Magnificent, Tarantula Ghoul or Ghoulardi, introduced and commented on each film. Highly visible, they became indelibly linked with horror on television. The television anthology series emerging in the late 1950s and early 1960s, drew upon this generic tradition and the success of Shock Theatre.

The Shock Theatre hosts, and their many imitators, lent films an additional frisson of terror or a comic splash of camp. Horror anthology series, in contrast, generally selected hosts with an authoritative voice, often bringing to television the authenticity of cinematic horror. *Boris Karloff's Thriller* drew upon Karloff's long legacy in the horror genre, with Karloff appearing in many episodes as well as in introductory segments and his presence, emerging from coffins or from behind crypt doors, set the gothic tone. Similarly, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* drew upon Hitchcock's reputation as a film director and his characteristic blend of horror, suspense and the comically macabre. While Hitchcock only directed 17 of the series'

270 episodes, his introductions promised a certain type of Hitchcockian narrative, giving the series an authorial stamp, regardless of his involvement in the production.

The notion of the horror host as auteur was best, and most literally, conveyed by Rod Serling in his television series *The Twilight Zone* and *The Night Gallery*. Serling was one of America's leading writers, renowned before *The Twilight Zone* for single-play social commentaries such as 'Patterns' and 'Requiem for a Heavyweight'. He wrote over 70 scripts in the 1950s and, as Jon Kraszewski points out, he used his reputation to 'create and produce [his] own series in the 1960s' (2008: 284). While *The Twilight Zone* is often described as science fiction, its storytelling blurs the lines between science fiction, fantasy and horror, producing what Serling described as 'imaginative tales' (quoted in Presnell and McGee 1998:15). As the series introduction cited above indicates, the show is preoccupied by the uneasy liminal space between the known and the unknown – the perfect space for horror. Some episodes were clearly horror tales designed to scare, such as the expressionist nightmare imagery in 'Perchance to Dream' (1.9), tales of gremlins sabotaging a plane in 'Nightmare at 20,000 Feet' (5.3), or a silent stalker pursuing a woman on a lonely highway in 'The Hitch-hiker' (1.16). Others evoked unease, unsettling the audience by unravelling the familiar. In 'Nightmare as a Child' (1.29) a woman is haunted by a strange child who knows too much about her past, only to realize that her child-self has returned to awaken repressed memories of her mother's murder. In 'Mirror Image' (1.21) the mundane is made uncanny when a woman waiting for a bus has a sinister encounter with her doppelganger. Finally, in 'The Monsters are Due on Maple Street' (1.22), Serling unleashes suburban paranoia and suspicion in a social commentary on McCarthyism. As Serling explained 'The worst fear of all … is the fear of the unknown working on *you*, which you cannot share with others' (quoted in Presnell and McGee 1998: 24).

Night Gallery was more overtly horror. When Serling originally pitched the series to ABC as *Rod Serling's Wax Museum*, he explained that it would focus on 'stories of the weird, the wild and the wondrous; stories that are told to the accompaniment of distant

banging shutters, an invisible creaking door, an errant wailing wind that comes from the dark outside' (quoted in Presnell and McGee 1998: 27). The promise of horror evoked in this gothic *mise-en-scène* was delivered in 'The Cemetery' (8/11/69), a tale of ghostly revenge, and by the spectral shadows of departed loved ones burned onto the walls of a family home in 'Certain Shadows on the Wall' (30/12/70). The series also offered modern takes on the uncanny such as 'The House' (30/12/70), discussed in Chapter 4, in which a woman is haunted by a 'daytime ghost'. 'Pamela's Voice' (13/1/71) offers a comically macabre twist on the old adage 'what goes around comes around' when a husband suffers a twisted punishment for murdering his wife.

Serling introduced each story, setting the scene and preparing the audience for the horrors to come. For Season 1 of *The Twilight Zone* his narration was in voice only, offering an omnipotent commentary on the characters and the uncanny events about to unfold. His staccato speech rhythm was unsettling while his omnipotence suggested that characters in *The Twilight Zone* had fallen victim to an invisible, capricious fate. From Season 2 Serling became an on-screen presence, often appearing on the sidelines of the set but invisible to the characters. His presence was intended to offer what the network felt was 'a much-needed dose of continuity and identity to the anthology series' (Presnell and McGee 1998: 18–19). Thus he became the face of the show's modern approach to the uncanny. As Lyndon Stambler explains, 'Serling, the shadowy host with the tight lipped grin, cigarette in hand, became as much a part of the show as its eerie black-and-white images and spooky score. His stolid voice beckoned millions into the murky world of his half-hour morality plays' (2006: 53). His mere presence promised the strange, the unusual, and the liminal.

Serling's critical acclaim as a television writer, the success of *The Twilight Zone* and his on-screen appearances made him a cultural icon of 1960s and 1970s television. Consequently his follow-up series was sold as *Rod Serling's Night Gallery* and he introduced each story in his inimitable manner, from a dark empty gallery filled with macabre, gothic paintings (see Fig. 5.1). Each week he selected two

or three paintings as subjects for the episode's portmanteau narrative. The introductions, all written by Serling, playfully enticed horror fans with promises of the ghoulish and ghostly:

5.1 Rod Serling in *Night Gallery*

> Good evening, and welcome to an art museum of the unique. Paintings offered up that infrequently find themselves hung in the more prosaic places, paintings that are frequently as much formaldehyde as pigment. So upon viewing if you sense a touch of the grave, the morgue, the concrete slab, count yourself more or less normal in terms of your taste in art – at least this art.
>
> (Introduction to 'Deliveries in the Rear' 9/2/72).

In contrast to Hitchcock's position as director and Karloff's role as actor, Serling, *The Twlight Zone*'s chief writer and executive producer, highlighted the importance of the writer within television, and horror TV in particular. Serling became the face of TV horror because of the quality and impact of his own work but he also stood in for all the writers showcased on both his programmes. This was a significant era for science fiction/horror writers, with work by Fritz Leiber, H. P. Lovecraft, Edgar Allan Poe and others being repeatedly adapted to the small screen. Furthermore, horror writers flourished, including Richard Matheson, Charles Beaumont, William F. Nolan and George Clayton Johnson, who all worked for Serling on *The*

Twilight Zone, complementing his unusual world vision with their own twisted views.

The importance of the writer on *The Twilight Zone* was comically recognized in 'A World of His Own' (1.36) written by Richard Matheson. Here, a writer discovers that describing a character into his Dictaphone brings that character to life. He can also make them disappear by burning the tape. In a comic twist, when Serling appears for the first time on screen at the end of the episode and begins to dismiss the story's content as 'ridiculous nonsense', the writer addresses Serling directly, rebuking his dismissal, pulls out a tape and burns it, making Serling disappear. Here the writer has complete creative control, even over the host, with Matheson having the final laugh: 'I think I was the only one who ever was able to add a sequence where Rod Serling was made to disappear, too' (quoted in Zicree 1982: 130). According to Christopher Conlon, Serling was well aware of the debt he owed to his 'supporting writers, whom he referred to as his "gremlins"', acknowledging their contribution at every opportunity. 'When the second Emmy came along, in fact, Serling held up the award during his acceptance speech and, addressing his "gremlins", said: "Come on over, fellas, and we'll carve it up like a turkey!"' (1999: 122).

Similarly, *Night Gallery* drew upon a legacy of horror short stories by Fritz Leiber, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, H. P. Lovecraft and Matheson, to name just a few. According to Scott Skelton and Jim Benson, both Serling and *Night Gallery* executive producer Jack Laird scoured issues of *Weird Tales* and horror anthologies looking for potential sources, with Laird admitting that 'material is always a problem in television, and in this genre [horror] it is virtually inexhaustible … Not only do you have tens of thousands of stories from specialists in this field, but almost every great writer of fiction tried tales of the supernatural and the mysterious at one time or another' (quoted in Skelton and Benson 1999: 93). This series, like *The Twilight Zone* before it, celebrated the horror writer.

On *The Twilight Zone*, Serling was the forerunner of the modern writer-producer, creatively controlling the series, writing 80 per cent of its episodes and pulling together a team of writers to deliver his

vision. Serling did not have the same experience on *Night Gallery*: reluctant to take on executive producer responsibilities, he lost creative control over the series. He did, however, maintain his role as host, and his voice over and on-camera appearances hosting both series conveyed Serling's position as auteur to the audience. Serling's name and visible presence promised a tale of terror featuring a simple uncanny premise with a disturbing twist, no matter who the author was.

NIGEL KNEALE: THE FATHER OF BRITISH TV HORROR

> It is not suitable for children or those of you who may have a nervous disposition.
>
> BBC warning before broadcast of 'The Coming', Episode 4 of *Quatermass II*

> The first time I was actually aware of something proved to be by Nigel Kneale was when I was nine years old, in late 1955. I was at primary school, and I remember one morning several of the kids in class coming in talking about the thing they'd seen the previous night on television. And one of them said how – I still remember pretty well the words he used – how the monsters stuffed someone up a pipe and his blood came spilling out. I remember thinking, never – they're making this up, you know … never would you see this kind of thing on television. That imprinted itself on my mind as a very powerful, nightmarish image at a very early age – even though I'd never seen it.
>
> Author Ramsey Campbell remembering 'The Frenzy', Episode 5 of *Quatermass II* (quoted in Murray 2006: 51)

Like Rod Serling in the USA, writer Nigel Kneale was a formative figure within early British television drama, adapting George Orwell's *1984* and Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, and writing some of the most memorable early original British programming; the *Quatermass* serials. Kneale, like Serling, made his name in television and returned to it despite success in cinema screenwriting. However, Kneale never played host or served as front man for his series. It was purely through writing highly influential TV serials, anthologies and single-

play dramas, initially for the BBC and later for British independent television, that Kneale became a recognizable name. While he had very productive collaborative relationships with a number of producers and directors, most notably Rudolph Cartier on the *Quatermass* serials, Peter Sasdy on *The Stone Tape* and Nick Palmer on *Beasts*, creative authorship is clearly attributed to Kneale through the on-screen credit 'by Nigel Kneale', privileging the screenwriter as author.

Kneale was one of the first British television writers who saw the potential for TV as an art form, and has subsequently been described as a pioneer of British TV drama. The content of his writing means he has, even more frequently, been described as the father of British Science Fiction TV (Brown 2007). Rarely, however, has Kneale been called a pioneer of British TV horror, despite critics and scholars often describing his work as chilling, uncanny, disturbing and downright frightening. In 1963, Bryan Buckingham titled his newspaper feature on Kneale's *The Road* 'your terror is his business'; in 1976 Garth Pearce headlined his review of *Beasts*, 'the man who had us quaking at Quatermass puts the frighteners on us again'; and in 1999 Jonathan Jones acknowledged that 'long before Ridley Scott's *Alien*, *Quatermass* was mixing a suspicion of technology with mutant space viruses, personality fusions and allusions to Satan'. As early as 1954, his adaptation of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* outraged many critics and caused viewers to complain to the BBC about the film's shocking and disturbing content (Murray 2006: 38–39). Furthermore, as noted above, the serial *Quatermass II* featured a warning by the BBC that the programme was not for children or those with a 'nervous disposition' yet in Ramsey Campbell's anecdote (above) kids were talking about one of the serial's moments of unbridled body horror the next day. Clearly the BBC's warning had gone unheeded.

One of the key features of Kneale's work is the relocation of horror to the everyday, something not entirely surprising given his association with British social realism through the British New Wave films *Look Back in Anger* and *The Entertainer*. Kneale infuses his horror with realism by eschewing the gothic location and atmosphere more traditionally associated with the genre. As he explains, 'the

strangest things ought to happen in the most ordinary places. If a monster appears in an everyday place, it's much more frightening than in some Gothic castle where you would expect it to be' (quoted in Wells 1999: 54–55). Thus, episodes of Kneale's anthology series *Beasts* are set in: a country home, an abandoned aquarium, a supermarket, a film studio, a pet store and a middle class suburban home. It is precisely the mundane quality of these locations that unsettles, much like contemporary British horror series such as *Being Human*, discussed in Chapter 6.

5.2 An ominous sign in 'During Barty's Party' *Beasts*

The majority of 'What Big Eyes' (episode 5) takes place in the apartment behind a neighbourhood pet store where an RSPCA agent discovers that scientist Leo Raymount is experimenting on wolves, injecting himself with wolf DNA in order to transform into a werewolf. There are no tell-tale signs of horror as the agent enters Raymount's living room, simply the clutter of a local eccentric. Raymount's private laboratory is not bathed in expressionistic lighting nor equipped with Frankenstein-style electrical equipment. Instead the simple sight of straps attached to a white vivisection table drives home his monstrosity. 'During Barty's Party' (episode 6) begins with a yellow convertible, seemingly abandoned by the side of the road. The

daylight opening appears innocuous, and disarmingly normal sounds of an advertisement for Peccadillo foam bath emanate from the car radio, suggesting perhaps a lovers' rendezvous. Dangling from the ignition is a plastic skull key chain that becomes a portent of doom as sudden screaming is heard offscreen. The final close-up of the skull dissolves to a close-up of Angie Truscott, awaking from a nightmare as the screams escalate, preparing us for horrific events in this unlikely suburban location (see Fig. 5.2).

Kneale's emphasis upon the everyday dictated visual style, adhering to traditions of British realism by de-emphasizing the gothic and the expressionist, in favour of neutral lighting and camera work. This style is enhanced by what John Thornton Caldwell calls the 'bland and neutral look that characterized video-origination studio productions' (1995: 12), used by the BBC and independent TV companies between the 1950s and the 1970s. This televisuality adds an additional layer of familiarity that is gradually unravelled by the supernatural in Kneale's narratives. 'During Barty's Party' takes place in a family home, shot on video in the studio. This could easily be *Coronation Street* or *George and Mildred*, making the increasingly frenzied sounds of rats swarming beneath the house, preparing to attack, all the more terrifying. When the lights eventually go out because the rats have chewed through the power lines, the transformation of a familiar location into a place of terror is complete. In this case, the dark does not represent the unknown – what lurks in the shadows – rather it signals the last vestiges of civilization as rats swarm through the house.

Kneale's television work, therefore, shares an identifiable approach to horror in its emphasis upon realism but it is also distinct in terms of content, particularly in bringing together science fiction and horror. While Serling's work on *The Twilight Zone* hybridizes the genres by exploring the liminal terrain between the known and the unknown, Kneale's approach to horror explores the relationship between science, technology and the supernatural, often by undermining rational foundations, or highlighting the horrors of science.

Many of his works parallel the supernatural and technology. While nineteenth century ghost stories by Rudyard Kipling, Arthur Conan Doyle and others reflect upon similarities between new technologies such as the telephone, telegraph and the phonograph, and telepathy and telekenisis in order to celebrate the wonders of technology, Kneale makes the supernatural mundane. In both *The Stone Tape* and *The Woman in Black*, ghostly visitations are compared to recording technologies. In *The Stone Tape*, scientists researching new electronic recording devices in an old manor house become convinced that ghostly visions of a house maid, Louisa, screaming and falling to her death are echoes of a past trauma, burned into the ancient stone foundations. This equation of hauntings with recordings is reinforced by the way sightings of Louisa are conveyed through a slightly degraded video superimposition of her image, which flickers and then fades away. Similarly, solicitor Arthur Kidd in *The Woman in Black* compares the repeating sounds of the deathly accident on the causeway to the wax cylinders recording his accounts of events at Eel Marsh House: 'It was exactly the same sequence of sounds as the previous time – the pony and trap going into the marsh, getting stuck and sinking. Every detail as if it were somehow recorded like the machine I'm speaking into now'. In both cases, equating the supernatural with existing technology makes the unfamiliar familiar. Kneale removes the horror from these 'recorded' events by suggesting that they are not sentient spirits but simply echoes of past events with no tangible impact upon the present. Thus science and technology are used by the protagonists to define, understand and therefore contain the phenomenon. In *The Stone Tape*, the scientists even reject loaded supernatural language – 'ghost, spook, apparition, phantom' – instead referring to the visions as 'a mass of data waiting for a correct interpretation'.

While this clinical approach to the supernatural potentially tips Kneale's work into science fiction, Kneale repeatedly undermines attempts to explain away the supernatural by uncovering greater horrors. In *The Stone Tape,* the scientists' attempts to control the 'recording' phenomenon cause them to not only erase the image of Louisa, but to awaken a much older recording from the stone –

something primal and malevolent dating back 7,000 years. This shapeless presence pursues Jill, the most sensitive, to her death, burning her screams into the stone, destined to repeat forever. Science's attempts to define and quantify unleashes horror upon the present, suggesting a new form of SF gothic in which the past haunts the present in a form never imagined.

Kneale's exploration of the horrific potential of science is best addressed in *The Road*.[15] Here two eighteenth-century protoscientists, Cobb and Sir Timothy, attempt to analyse and identify recurring noises emanating from a 'supposed' haunted wood. While one suggests that the noises are some form of natural event, the other attempts to use science to prove the existence of ghosts. Eventually it becomes apparent, however, that the cause is both supernatural and scientific. Rather then a traumatic event from the past haunting the present, the sounds – a thermo-nuclear blast that rips through time – actually emanate from the future, warning of what is to come. *The Road* offers Kneale's strongest message about the perils of science, suggesting a kinship between these early scientists and their twentieth-century brethren that will set humanity on the road to self-destruction. This narrative openly displays an anxiety that recurs across much of Kneale's work, which Dave Rolinson and Nick Cooper describe as the juxtaposition of 'barbarism with advanced technology as products of the same drive' (2002: 163).

Throughout Nigel Kneale's career, he integrated science fiction, horror and the language of realism to create a new, modern horror for television in which the monstrous is repeatedly found within the everyday, a conception that would shape the future of British TV horror. The continued labelling of Kneale's work as science fiction attests to the broader invisibility of horror on television. While audiences and critics alike recognize the emotional impact of his work, his choice of generic iconography results in him being perceived as a science fiction writer, ignoring emotional affect. When reconsidering his work, however, Kneale can be seen as not only a writer of horror but a horror auteur, developing recurring stylistic, narrative and thematic tropes broadly across his writings,

demonstrating a distinct, and influential, approach to the genre. While horror was not the only genre within which Kneale worked, it proved to be one of the most effective for communicating his ideals.

STEVEN MOFFAT: '26 ZOMBIE EXTRAS'

Writer Steven Moffat became a household name when he took over from Russell T. Davies as *Doctor Who*'s showrunner in 2009. Discussing classic *Doctor Who*, Hills argues that the author-function is part of its nature as both British TV and a BBC production (2010a: 30). While Moffat, like Kneale, has been involved in screenwriting for cinema, the fact that he left Spielberg's *The Adventures of Tintin* to return to *Doctor Who* proves his commitment to television. Moffat's *Doctor Who* episodes have been regularly nominated for awards: 'The Empty Child/The Doctor Dances' (1.9/10), 'The Girl in the Fireplace' (2.4), 'Blink' (3.10) and 'The Pandorica Opens/The Big Bang' (5.12/13) all won Hugos; 'Blink' won a Best Writer BAFTA. They are also cited as all-time favourites by viewers, as numerous polls attest ('Blink' won Best Story in the *Doctor Who Magazine* 2007 reader survey, and came second in *Doctor Who Magazine*'s 2009 poll to find the greatest *Doctor Who* story ever). Moreover, they are described as the scariest episodes of the revived series. The BBC's panel of Fear Forecasters (child viewers who score the episodes for scares prior to broadcast) rates early Moffat episodes high ('Blink' gets an unprecedented 5.5, or 'off the scale!', Fear Forecast). Moffat has also worked on other shows that proclaim themselves as authored TV horror.

The brief, contemporary on-screen titles for *Jekyll* demonstrate how the show presents itself: as a star vehicle (actor James Nesbitt's name appears first[16]), as a version of the well-known Robert Louis Stevenson story (the title *Jekyll* appears second) and as an authored drama in the BBC tradition Hills cites (Moffat's name appears after the title). All other credits run over the opening action of the episode. Producer Jeffrey Taylor describes the project as 'very, very commercial' because the story's terms (Jekyll and Hyde) are in

constant, everyday use and Moffat saw his challenge as remaking a story that might be dismissed as 'a genre piece' for 'people who like horror and scifi' for 'a mainstream audience' ('The Tale Retold' 2007). He succeeded. *Jekyll* aired in five countries outside the UK, and during its broadcast on BBC One in a prime-time Saturday slot the opening episode attracted 5.1 million viewers (a 24 per cent audience share), although figures declined subsequently (see Dowell 2007). Moffat updates the story and targets the desirable mainstream audience by focusing on Jekyll character Tom Jackman's relationships.

Yet, despite its 'mainstream' address, *Jekyll* signals itself as horror throughout. The first image is a chair in a basement, offering, in its deliberate likeness to the electric chair, what Moffat calls a 'hint of execution' (Moffat, Cameron, Mackinnon 2007). Other emphatically horror images follow, such as writing in blood on a hotel room wall (episode 3), as well as nods to horror cinema (Jackman's PA resigns in episode 4 after he gives her notes which consist of the repeated words, 'I'm coming' *à la The Shining*). Twitchell observes that the story reveals and conceals 'the central lore, the explosive shock, those brief appearances of Hyde' (1985: 236). Presented as pure predator, Hyde here menaces Jackman's family, kills a lion (yes, a lion), tortures people for information and takes the ear from his first kill as a souvenir, leaving it in Jackman's pocket (episode 4). Yet, typically for a Moffat script and for contemporary quality TV, moral distinctions are far from simple: Hyde is not a villain, nor is Jackman a hero. Hyde manages to act heroically, while Jackman commits dubious acts, implying not only that everyone has a dark side, but that they are the same man all along.

Also typically for Moffat, the script presents a complex narrative that moves back and forth through time (what Jason Mittell might call a narrative special effect, see Hills 2010a: 221). It starts mid-flow, prompting actor Nesbitt to explain that it's as if there were a 'series zero' that we haven't seen ('The Tale Retold'). 'Series zero', the story preceding the present action, is revealed across six episodes and a range of time periods. To detail only a few: episode 2 follows on from the first episode but reverses, to uncover backstory; episode 4

flashes back to seven years before when Jackman met his wife, fastforwards through their marriage, and finally takes us to 'Edinburgh, 1886', introducing Dr Jekyll and author Stevenson (played by actor/writer Mark Gatiss). The final episode ends 'six months later' in mid-action, without fully resolving Jackman's problems, and Alec Charles describes how it 'offers a sudden reversal, an unforeseen revelation of the agonisingly obvious, as two of the drama's central characters are exposed as facets of the same person' (2011: 5). Narrative intricacy and knowing references to Stevenson's novella[17] mark the drama as quality TV adaptation as well as horror.

In contrast, the original run of *Doctor Who*, as James Chapman notes, had problems negotiating horror content in the 1970s when producer Philip Hinchcliffe and script editor Robert Holmes tried to shift the show 'decisively away from the association of a children's series' (2006: 99). This era became, Chapman argues, darker, more morally ambiguous and more horrific in imagery, offering a combination of SF and horror that referred back to Kneale and anticipated films like *Alien* (101). The reincarnated *Doctor Who* retains science fiction and horror roots but carefully presents itself as family viewing: 'Our *Doctor Who* is very, very, very Saturday night,' comments Davies (quoted in Hills 2010a: 117). Moffat acknowledges these restrictions, 'We can't really show anything' (quoted in Hills 2010a: 119), yet his scripts consistently draw on and refigure horror tropes, pushing the boundaries of what might be considered 'too scary' (as 'Blink's Fear Factor rating demonstrates). While Hills argues convincingly that new *Doctor Who* valorizes the collaborative nature of TV production and 'represents … a refusal to limit authorship to a singular vision', (2010a: 30; that is, the notion of auteurism typical of 'quality' TV), he also admits that Moffat's writing is often assumed to have a distinctive signature (31).

His two-parter 'The Empty Child/The Doctor Dances' is set during the London Blitz. As Chapman notes, it features 'starving children, child abuse and teenage single mothers', elements uncommon 'in home front narratives of the Second World War' (2006: 198), and this take on social realism is a feature of period TV horror already noted in

previous chapters. The story reworks several familiar horror tropes – masked monster/s (gasmasks are justified by the Blitz); dark and menacing urban streets (likewise); a creepy child ('it's not exactly a child', says Nancy to the Doctor in 'The Empty Child'); communication technologies (telephone, gramophone) that uncannily work by themselves, repeating the child's chilling refrain, 'Are you my mummy?'[18] Examination of the mysterious gas-masked 'zombies', (director James Hawes refers to 'The Doctor Dances' having '26 zombie extras' in 'Weird Science' 2009), reveals that the 'gas mask seems to be fused to the flesh', as the Doctor comments. The transformation scene as people are taken over, is 'very organic' a kind of 'coughing up from within' (Will Cohen, visual effects producer, in 'Special Effects' 2009), leading Davies to conclude it 'Pushes the fear and a certain level of body horror all the way to the limit' ('Special Effects 2009'[19]). This body horror is rendered acceptable for family viewing by matching it with 'romance' between the Doctor's companion, Rose, and Captain Jack Harkness, in addition to a feel-good happy ending ('Just this once, everybody lives!' beams the Doctor, 'The Doctor Dances').

Similar elements are at work in 'Blink', which derives from a story Moffat wrote for a *Doctor Who* annual, though he describes how he 'added a bit more fear and terror' ('Do You Remember the First Time?' 2009). Again taking horror staples – the haunted house, what you can't see, predators with large teeth – Moffat plays with genre conventions in a complex narrative that makes full use of time travel, even in a 'Doctor-lite' episode. Hills calls it 'probably the most intricately structured of all *Doctor Who* episodes' (2010a: 98) and it produces horror *from* time travel and human mortality; how, as Moffat comments, you can create 'a relationship in the flick of an eye' (Moffat and Gold 2009). Protagonist Sally Sparrow loses her best friend Kathy when Kathy is projected backwards in time, and potentially loses a lover/romance when police inspector Billy is also moved back in time, meeting him again only when he is dying. These large philosophical issues are balanced by a diegetic DVD extra that saves the world, a

possible romance between Sally and Kathy's brother Larry, the now-famous 'timey-wimey' explanation, as well as scary monsters.

'Blink' opens in 'creepy, creepy house land', the haunted house evoked by Murray Gold's music cues, and Gold comments that the animated statues, the weeping angels, remind him of Stephen King's novel *The Shining*, in which topiary animals act as the focus for horror (Moffat and Gold 2009). The angels cannot move when someone is looking directly at them, making for tense moments and culminating in Sally and Larry trapped in a dark cellar, trying not to blink as the statues advance, caught by flashes of light in menacing postures. Even elements used as comedy, like the Doctor as DVD Easter egg, also do duty as uncanny horror. David Tennant admits that the 'disembodied conversation' the Doctor has with Sally and Larry is 'spooky' and 'creepy' ('Do You Remember the First Time?'), as well as funny. And although this episode has a moderately happy ending, it appends a unique coda, what Charles calls a 'visual aside to the audience' (2011: 10), offering a rapid montage of the many statues that surround us in everyday life and closing on the words 'Don't blink', as a means of continuing the horror.

MASTERS OF HORROR: 'BEYOND THE COMMONPLACE MALL-CINEMA FARE'

If Moffat exemplifies the writer as contemporary British TV auteur, *MoH*'s unique selling point is the auteur film director. As noted already, this show challenges many assumptions about TV and horror. While foregrounding its guest directors' feature film resumes, discourse around the show paradoxically suggests that TV offers more freedom to push genre boundaries. Heather Hendershot contrasts the relative freedom of cable TV channels and their desire to produce innovative, edgy television that distinguishes their brand, with the constraints of working in contemporary US cinema under 'Hollywood studio micromanagers' (2011: 145). Or, as a *Fangoria* editorial puts it, on TV directors can 'make programmes good and scary, without corporate interference and censorship' (Timpone 2006:

4). Takashi Miike, one of two directors discussed here, started out in straight-to-video and TV, and makes a point of the 'freedom' of these media (Miike 2007). Thus TV is positioned at the cutting edge of horror, with directors invited to 'stretch the envelope and do the kinds of things that go beyond the commonplace mall-cinema fare' (Garris quoted in Timpone 2006: 4).

We have chosen to examine the *MoH* episodes directed by Miike and Italian director Dario Argento. 'Argento was one of only two directors in the series to take full advantage of the creative freedom the project offered, Takashi Miike being the other,' observes James Gracey (2010: 159), though 'Jenifer' (1.4) (the first Argento contribution) was the only episode to have cuts imposed and Miike's episode never aired in the USA (see below). Censorship has long been an issue for horror and Hills argues that it 'operates, culturally and discursively, as the enemy and the engine of horror fandom. Fan subculture is highly critical of State practices while performing subcultural distinction through connotations of "secrecy" and "illicitness"' (2005a: 105). In this sense, the censoring of Argento's and Miike's work for *MoH* reinforces it as authentic horror and guarantees DVD sales, prolonging the show's life beyond its original broadcast.

Argento's films were hard to find, censored, or banned in the UK, so fans had to seek them out, enacting what Hills calls a 'quest narrative' that validates their fandom (2005a: 104). Fan-writers build a case for Argento as an artist and make 'frequent references to the director as "the master"' (Hutchings 2003:135), demonstrating his credentials for inclusion in *MoH*. He directed two *MoH* episodes, one for the first and one for the second season. While 'Jenifer' and 'Pelts' (2.6) lack his characteristic roaming camera (presumably for budgetary reasons or limitations of time), other elements declare them as Argento's work. An article in *Fangoria* promises that 'Pelts' 'will look very much like his classic fare, with the kind of vibrant, operatic style fans associate with the Italian maestro' (Van Buskirk 2006: 61). Both episodes push the boundaries, even for a show that, as Totaro observes, succeeds in bringing 'some of the most outrageously intense, violent, sexual, controversial, and *political* horror images to television screens' (2010: 87). 'Pelts' is described by

producer Garris as 'our wet episode … Very wet, very bloody' and Meat Loaf, who plays protagonist Jake Feldman, relates how he was told that the scene where Jake peels the skin off his own torso 'made horror movie history' ('Fleshing it Out' 2007). The proximity to contemporary 'horror-porn' may be why Gracey dismisses 'Pelts,' concluding, 'none of [Argento's] usual flair is evident here' (2010: 166), even though Attila Szalay, director of photography on both episodes, insists that it is 'Visually … much more of an Argento piece than "Jenifer"' (quoted in Van Buskirk 2006: 61).

It is easy to see how both fans and scholars might prefer to analyse 'Jenifer'. While Argento's work is often taken 'to confirm everyone's worst fears about the horror film as a sadistic and misogynist treatment of violence rendered into ultrachic spectacle', as Leon Hunt comments (2000), it frequently explores masculinity. Argento describes 'Jenifer' as Beauty and the Beast in reverse ('So Hideous My Love' 2007). Appearing initially as a damsel in distress when protagonist Frank Spivey rescues her from a man trying to kill her, the mysterious Jenifer has a highly attractive body, a horribly disfigured face and exhibits child-like behaviour that at times slides into savagery. The fact that 'she is to be pitied as much as feared' (Gracey 2010: 161) inflects graphic renderings of her sexual and violent acts with ambiguity. Is Jenifer responsible for her actions? Does Frank really seek to protect her? Like Joe Dante's 'The Screwfly Solution' (2.7) (discussed in Chapter 4), 'Jenifer' draws attention to gendered and sexual behaviour, questioning the role of physical attraction and painting a bleak picture of male obsession. Frank loses his wife and son because of Jenifer, but it is not until she kills a child that he acts, ineffectively, to stop her. The tragic inevitability of the plot, as Frank tries to kill Jenifer and is himself killed by another man who stumbles across them, brings the story full circle, suggesting an endless cycle of sex and violence.

Both the violence and the sensuality of Jenifer's interactions are graphically detailed. One of the scenes that was cut depicts Jenifer performing oral sex on Frank. Argento says he was fascinated by the thought of oral sex from a character with a deformed mouth ('So Hideous My Love' 2007) but in the end the detail was considered too

strong and the act is only implied. Similarly, another cut was made towards the end of the episode when Jenifer seduces a young man, biting off his penis. Other scenes of violence are shown (her violently biting the Spivey family cat, for instance), and several explicit sex scenes are included. It is apparently the conjunction of sex and violence, especially castration, that is considered beyond the pale, even for *MoH*.

Both fans and academics worked to establish Argento as a horror auteur. Japanese director, Takashi Miike, on the other hand, describes himself as a director for hire and takes on work at a rate that credits him with seventy-plus projects at the time of writing (including straight-to-video, cinema and TV productions).[20] Tom Mes notes that Miike had made 34 films before *Audition*, his first international release (2006: 181), and both director and film benefited from the popularity of Japanese horror in the West at the time. Hills' study of web-based fan discussion about Japanese horror films and their US remakes demonstrates that 'Whereas US horror, and especially the remaking of Japanese originals, is represented as juvenile, excessively fast-paced and self-consciously "stylish", Japanese horror is instead constructed as serious, reflective and less accessible (or not meant for) the American teen market' (2005b: 169). Again, as with Argento fans, seeking out the exotic accrues subcultural capital, allowing fans to position themselves in opposition to commercial horror, and *MoH* producer Garris states that he was keen to include Asian horror ('Imprinting' 2007).

The UK DVD release of *MoH* Series 1, Volume 2 identifies Miike as the director of *Audition* and *Ichi the Killer*, two of his most graphic films. 'Imprint' (1.13) is the only *MoH* episode not broadcast in the USA, although it was included in the DVD release, and aired in other countries (Kerr [2010] gives a more detailed analysis of this incident). Naturally, this enhanced Miike's reputation as a transgressive horror 'master'. As Steffan Hantke says of *Audition*, however, 'it is not Miike's willingness to resort to visual and thematic extremes that makes the film unique' (2005: 55). In 'Imprint' the graphic violence is set in high relief by a stylized period setting and it is as much a formal

experiment in unreliable narrative as it is a gorefest. Miike chose a period setting to set his episode apart, 'I thought a step back to old Japan would be fun and visually pleasing for American audiences', perhaps also trading on Asian exoticism to entice his audience (quoted in England 2006: 10). Stylization alerts viewers to the fabrication of stories in general and the exotic nature of period drama, genre horror and Asian horror on US TV distance us from the tale at hand. 'Imprint's depiction of torture may be graphically realistic, but the twin/split personality of the narrator, revealed towards the end, can be considered convincingly 'real' by few (a hand with an eye in the centre comes directly out of her temple), however lovingly crafted. Such a blatant device works alongside constant changes to the story of character Komomo's death to foreground the impossibility of singular narrative truth. The final scenes suggest that Christopher's story about seeking his true love, Komomo, is questionable, and that he also conceals dark secrets.

While *MoH* sells itself via the names of well-known horror film directors, it also embraces auteurism in other terms. As Hills notes, effects designers are 'clearly treated as *auteurs* of a sort within sections of horror fandom and in associated magazines' (2005a:88). *Fangoria* articles on *MoH* regularly include comments from directors of photography, make-up and effects people, as well as producers, directors, actors and writers. When the show aired in the USA, *Fangoria* ran regular articles on it, one of which was entirely devoted to effects (Van Buskirk 2006). Likewise DVD features often concentrate on the creation of effects. 'Howard Berger and the Make-Up of Jenifer' and 'Imperfect Beauty: The Make-Up and Special Effects of Imprint' stand out on the first DVD collection, but the second series DVDs include effects features for four of six instalments on both 2.1 and 2.2. As well as behind the scenes footage and interviews, the 'Jenifer' featurette describes effects that weren't used – outtake effects as a version of the deleted scenes that often appear on DVD releases. The features for the Argento contributions may highlight effects because these were undertaken by Howard Berger (who formed the KNB EFX group with Gregory Nicotero and Robert Kurtzman), a name likely to be known to *Fangoria*-reading

fans[21]. Miike also prefers 'analogue' effects, hence the animatronic hand twin monster: 'I quite like the beauty or fear of something which is incomplete' ('Imperfect Beauty' 2007).

Miike and Argento, from different countries, different backgrounds and with different reception histories (in fandom and scholarship), highlight the variety of approaches that *MoH* encapsulates. Argento's version of horror is very different to Miike's, which is different again to Dante's or Carpenter's[22], though perhaps their position as non-Americans encourages them to experiment more boldly with the TV format. *MoH*'s range is part of its appeal, demonstrating that in cinema or on TV, horror means different things to different people. It also suggests that horror only works this well on TV if 'real' horror auteurs can be lured away from their natural home in cinema. As we have demonstrated, however, TV now seems to be the place where these auteurs can produce 'real' horror, impacting on our understanding of the changing relationship between film and television. Furthermore, when we consider these directors alongside the horror hosts, writers and showrunners discussed in this chapter, television has, since the early days, proven to be a space for creative experimentation in the genre. TV horror auteurs continue to both shape and be shaped by television.

6. Revising the Gothic

> Gothic … marks a peculiarly modern preoccupation with boundaries and their collapse … the monsters of modernity are characterized by their proximity to humans
>
> (Halberstam 2006: 23)

Some suggest TV gothic is just period horror, a literary adaptation of a gothic novel like *Dracula* or *Frankenstein*; others see the gothic as a mode that privileges terror (see Wheatley 2006: 12). Rather than attempting a detailed history of the term, this chapter explores ways gothic is frequently revised for TV horror. The gothic, in its most recognizable manifestations, exhibits rich surface detail, distinctive iconography (that may include iconic monsters) and consciousness of its detachment from the 'real' or from realism. (This perhaps derives from the way 1930s Universal horror films drew on German Expressionism to create a distinctive 'look'.) Gothic is also frequently concerned with interiority, subjectivity and identity. This chapter first examines texts which seem to privilege the pleasurable excess and performativity of gothic (*American Gothic*, *True Blood*), while going on to analyse shows that choose a more realistic mode of presentation (*Ultraviolet* and *Being Human*). All participate in the gothic (using Spooner's borrowing from Derrida [2006]) by exploring the self. As Judith Halberstam, in the quotation that opens this chapter, argues, 'Gothic … marks a peculiarly modern preoccupation with boundaries and their collapse … the monsters of modernity are characterized by

their proximity to humans' (2006: 23). This is as much the case in *True Blood*, where vampires have 'outed' themselves to co-exist with humans as it is in *Being Human*, where the title foregrounds the desire of 'monsters' to maintain humanity.

In the 1970s, horror cinema shifted from period settings and gothic/supernatural tropes to contemporary and 'real' horror. Films like *Rosemary's Baby*, *Last House on the Left* or *The Exorcist* are responses to the relaxing of film censorship, but also to the tradition of period horror. This had already been apparent in horror fiction, with writers like Richard Matheson and Shirley Jackson influencing major names like Stephen King with their reworking of the gothic. On television, horror takes approaches to revising the gothic that logically develop national traditions. Our examples demonstrate how rewriting the gothic for television engages with dichotomies of past/present, rural/urban and expressionist/realist as part of gothic's preoccupation with exterior/interior. *Dark Shadows*, for instance, is set in the contemporary era but aligns itself with female gothic, especially through its well-known opening voice-over:

> My name is Victoria Winters. My journey is beginning – a journey that I hope will open the doors of life and link my past with my future. A journey that will bring me to a dark place to the edge of the sea high atop Widow's Hill; and a house called Collinwood. A world never known, with people I've never met. People who, tonight, are still only shadows in my mind but who will soon fill the days and nights of my tomorrow …

This direct-address episode prologue positions Victoria Winters as a typical gothic heroine and the narrative as a gothic tale in the tradition of *Jane Eyre*, both intimately communicating with the viewer.

For American TV horror, rural gothic offers the flipside of the American Dream and mainstream US identity. *Twin Peaks* presents a small-town milieu clinging to old values, at times in tension with shifting, modern identities, seen both through the eyes of the incomer Agent Cooper and from the perspective of the town's residents. Similarly, in *The X-Files*' 'Home' the sheriff of Home, Pennsylvania tells Mulder and Scully, 'I'd like it if things round here didn't have to change', while realizing that the discovery of a deformed infant

corpse in a shallow grave makes change inevitable. Like Cooper, the FBI agents respond to this atmosphere as outsiders: Mulder with sentimental nostalgia, Scully with the derisive observation that living in Home would be like 'living in Mayberry', a comment that also highlights media influence on our idealized versions of community (the sheriff is even called Andy Taylor). Some stories emphasize that the horror masked by an idyllic rural setting is all too human, as seen in *Torchwood*'s 'Countrycide' (1.6), and *Supernatural*'s 'The Benders' (1.15), as well as 'Home'. Each is clearly influenced by horror cinema such as *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, which Darryl Jones describes as 'one of a series of important American regional Gothic films … which dramatize bruising encounters between modern, urban types and deranged backwoods (and backwards) folk' (2002: 44). The down-home atmosphere in such fictions is at once traditional and 'othered' in a contemporary, rational world.

Richard Davenport-Hines argues that 'in the United States there is a special obsession with the latent ogres of violence lurking under suburban and small-town proprieties' (1998: 361). The legacy of violence is enhanced within representations of Southern gothic which, according to Teresa Goddu, has become 'identified with gothic doom and gloom' and now 'serves as the nation's "other", becoming the repository for everything from which the nation wants to dissociate itself' (1997: 3–4). As a result Southern gothic presents the South, in literature, film and television, as backward, brutal, corrupt, in-bred, grotesque, hysteric and governed by its own rules and traditions. It is an alien world in which anything can happen and it is in this world that *American Gothic* and *True Blood* are set. Following a tradition of Southern gothic writing from Edgar Allan Poe and William Faulkner, to Anne Rice and Poppy Z. Brite, these series offer a revisionist approach to horror when applied to television.

While both shows have contemporary settings, their representation of the South connects them with the past and with mythologies of the supernatural, whether vampires, shapeshifters, or maenads in *True Blood*, or the eternal battle between good and evil in *American Gothic*. Supernatural elements also lend themselves to types of visual excess commonly associated with gothic and horror.

True Blood is a prime example of this approach, influenced by predecessors like *Twin Peaks* and *American Gothic* but liberally spiced with HBO's 'adult' approach to showing sex on television, it offers a new spin on the vampire and an arresting, quirky, in-your-face gothic. Both *True Blood* and *American Gothic* play with the image of the South as decadent and sensual, using it as a form of excess. Yet, as Lisa Nakamura *et al* suggest, the dark, bloody and violent past of the southern United States is often rewritten as family or personal history that mirrors, but perhaps sidesteps, more specific regional and national history (2009). These shows negotiate between regional flavour and globalized media product ready for international export.

In contrast, another recognizable trend in reworking the gothic plays on understatement. This strategy reframes gothic horror in a realist fashion that uses the mundane to heighten the contrast between the fantastic and the everyday. Horror, as Peter Hutchings observes, often 'conjur[es] up … strange realms within or in relation to a world of normality' (2004: 105). Rosemary Jackson argues that realism is essential to this process, since 'Fantasy re-combines and inverts the real, but it does not escape it: it exists in a parasitical or symbiotic relation to the real' (1988: 20). Gothic sitcoms like *The Addams Family* and *The Munsters* appear to be fantastic because of their gothic iconography, yet the 'real world' suburban family situation is what generates interest for the audience. Subsequent examples include episodes of *The X-Files* such as 'Hungry' (7.03), which uses a shift in point of view to present the story of a fast food worker suffering from an eating disorder. We never discover if he is an alien, a vampire or a genetic freak since the episode is less concerned with solving the mystery of his otherness, than with depicting its sympathetic, alienated protagonist's body (couched in a contemporary discourse of eating disorders and compulsions) and interiority, as he tries to come to terms with his nature. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*'s sixth season also shifted from gothic to realism. Here Buffy struggles to support her younger sister, Dawn, both financially and emotionally after the death of their mother, dropping

out of college to work in a fast food outlet, repeatedly distracted from her Slayer mission by faulty plumbing and single 'parenting'.

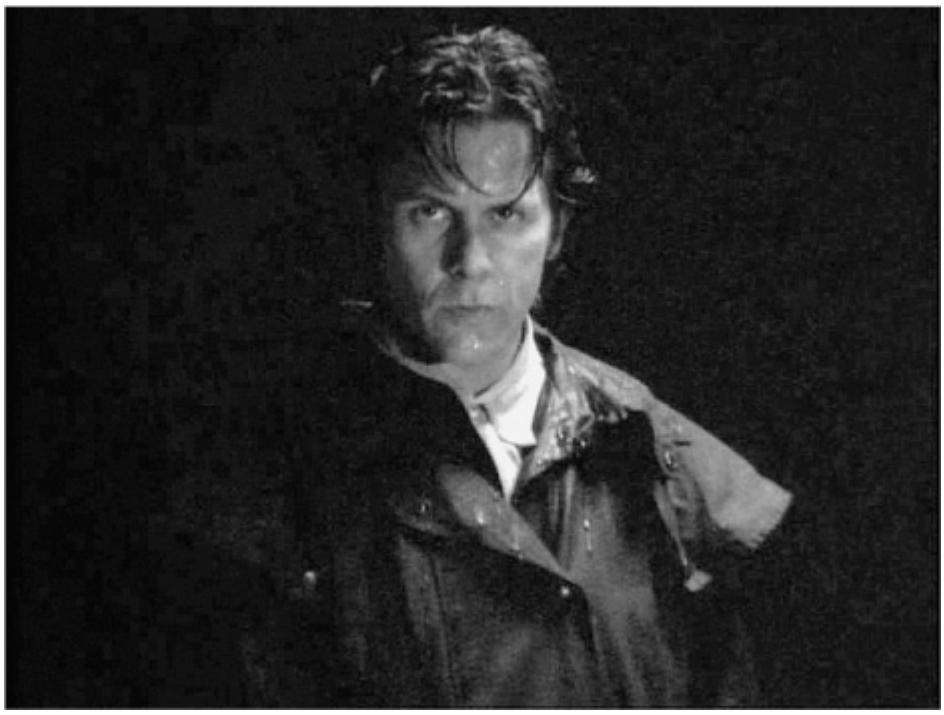
If post-1970 horror movies tend to eliminate the supernatural elements prevalent in traditional gothic horror, the examples above suggest that television prefers to rewrite them via realism. Cult vampire series *Ultraviolet* and *Being Human* combine the supernatural fantastic with the everyday, aesthetically as well as thematically, developing George Romero's cinematic flat mundanity, so successfully demonstrated in *Dawn of the Dead* and *Martin*. While Romero is a neat comparison, *Ultraviolet* and *Being Human* arguably shape the vampire according to British traditions. Eddie Robson, writing on US gothic TV, warns that it is 'dangerous to overstate the extent to which British soaps are "realistic" compared to their American counterparts' (2007: 243), yet social realism is still a discernible characteristic and a critically privileged mode in British cinema and television, as examination of Nigel Kneale's work in Chapter 5 shows. Tension between tradition and modernization, fantasy and realism is even apparent in Hammer horror. Jonathan Coe points out that period Hammer films appear to be traditional high gothic but they 'insist that extremes of violence and extremes of cosiness can and must coexist' (quoted in Leach 2004: 170).

The more performed and excessive gothic worlds of *True Blood* and *American Gothic* allow for fantastic phenomena to be accommodated; *Ultraviolet* and *Being Human* are rooted in the mundane physical world and often deal with the materiality of the supernatural. All trade on the familiarity of viewers with the material, whether this is gothic tropes and icons, the paranormal or the familiar mundane settings of urban backstreets and the recognizable mode of social realism. The gothic may be rewritten from different angles but each show is about who we are. 'We' may be blue collar Southerners, hospital porters or civil servants but, human, vampire or werewolf, the same problems arise. This proximity of monsters to humans – to us – means that familiar tropes and conventions from melodrama are used to negotiate the all-too-human areas of family, sexuality, friendship and work.

SOUTHERN GOTHIC

> The secret history of the south is hidden in blood.
>
> Mrs Gardner (‘Ring of Fire’ *American Gothic*)

According to David Eick, Shaun Cassidy, head writer/producer of *American Gothic*, ‘would always say it is not a horror show and it’s not about the devil. It’s a thriller and it’s about a mysterious creature … and about family. And then Sam Raimi would get to TV Guide and say “it’s a horror show pure and simple. He’s the devil and that is all there is to it”’ (Cassidy and Eick 2006). *American Gothic* is therefore firmly rooted in traditions of gothic and horror. Set in Trinity, South Carolina, *American Gothic* tells the story of a small-town community ruled by the, quite literally, diabolical machinations of its county sheriff Lucas Buck. Cassidy explains that the setting ‘seemed like a very fertile little world to set a television show where evil could bloom with a great deal of charm’ (Cassidy and Eick 2006). Rather then simply chronicling the slow growth of evil within small-town America, the series stages a grand battle between good and evil, but one that is laced with ambiguity and complicity. In presenting this battle, the series employs the psychological subtleties of the gothic alongside the overt stylistics of horror. In this revision of TV gothic, Lucas Buck is both the evil in men *and* the devil (see Fig. 6.1).



6.1 Sheriff Buck: The evil in men and the devil *American Gothic*

Beyond the narrative setting, *American Gothic* evokes the conventions of Southern gothic through its cosy atmosphere and hallucinatory style, influenced according to Cassidy and producer Eick by Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird,* and the fiction of William Faulkner (Cassidy and Eick 2006). The show's earthy colour scheme and realist aesthetic suggest *In Cold Blood*, particularly the stark brutality of Merlyn Temple's murder, first as her father hits her over the head with a shovel and then as Sheriff Buck snaps her neck to finish the job ('Pilot'). The brutality of this opening, perceived by Cassidy and Eick as a challenging approach for commercial television, is contrasted with episodes like 'To Hell and Back' (1.14) and 'Potato Boy' (1.19) which evoke the gothic childlike fantasies of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, as Caleb Temple and his friends look for monsters only to be confronted by neighbourhood wonders that exist alongside the violence.

It is, however, the representation of family and community that calls the literature of Faulkner to mind. According to Davenport-Hines, Faulkner's work depicts the American South as being 'tyrannised by

the community with lynchings, tar-and-feather and other group barbarities, and more subtly but no less harshly controlled by the Southern Gentlemen's code of honour. Family histories in American gothic were vampiric, destructive, implacable' (1998: 296). The show's focus upon Buck's attempt to reclaim his illegitimate son Caleb and the subsequent battle between Buck and Caleb's angelic dead sister Merlyn for his soul, demonstrates that family is central to the series' matrix. As Helen Wheatley has suggested: 'the family is consistently depicted as the site of past transgressions and a traumatic revisitation of history' (2006: 187).

Equally important, however, is Buck's relationship to the community. Throughout the show, we are reminded that the root of the evil is not necessarily Buck but the community, whose attitude towards Buck is 'don't ask don't tell'. The show emphasizes the dichotomy between the polite and formal exterior of the South versus the interior truth of corruption and social decay in which deals are made with Buck for personal or community gain. Repeatedly Buck manipulates people into bringing forth their own damnation by appealing to their greed or pride. In 'Resurrector' (1.13) radio talk show host Mel Kirby agrees to murder his wife in exchange for a career in television while 'Strong Arm of the Law' (1.7) reveals the town's dependence upon Buck when a group of northern criminals begin extorting money from the townsfolk. While they are quick to condemn Buck when they think the criminals work for him, the townsfolk are equally happy to depend upon him to solve their problems. 'Inhumanitas' (1.10) reveals that the local priest, Father Tilden, betrayed the sanctity of the confessional by divulging the sins of the community to Buck, in order to protect his church (not the institution but the building). With the exception of the priest, who redeems himself by rejecting Buck and protecting Caleb, the others reap a form of twisted justice when their deals with Buck backfire on them. In Trinity, the adage 'be careful what you ask for or you shall surely get it' has particular resonance. Even Gail Emory, the big city journalist who comes to Trinity both to protect Caleb and to expose Buck's crimes, is seduced by Buck despite her awareness of his diabolical associations. As a result she becomes embroiled in his

power games when she discovers she is pregnant. These people are complicit in their own downfall. Where *Twin Peaks* presents a surreal world in which the line between the 'normal' and the 'gothic' is blurred (see Chapter 8), *American Gothic* presents a community that is complicit in Buck's evil actions. He is able to thrive in Trinity because there is already a darkness beneath the surface of the town, born of blood and violence.

The south in *American Gothic* is equally presented as a liminal location in which lines between dream and reality blur. According to Lenora Ledwon, one definition of gothic suggests that it is the 'literature of nightmare' (2003: 261). *American Gothic* transforms this literary tradition into a televisual format not simply by evoking nightmares in the show's surreal atmosphere, but by removing the line that separates dream from reality. Repeatedly, those who become embroiled in the battle for Trinity are pulled into an alternate reality, neither dream nor waking world, in which their fortitude is tested. Often these sequences involve, in gothic fashion, the intrusion of the past on the present, but the manner in which they are presented emphasizes the co-existence of dream and reality. In 'The Beast Within' (1.13) Caleb has a nightmare set in a hell-like corridor of prison cells in which he witnesses a shadow figure hand a razor blade to a prisoner who uses it to cut into his stomach. Later Caleb, Gail, Lucas and Dr Matt are abducted by the man from his dream, who reveals that he has implanted a bomb into his stomach. This is presented as a premonition, signalling Caleb's latent power, and the vision itself is coded as a dream sequence ending with Caleb waking in horror.

In contrast, numerous episodes feature visions where the dreams seem to intrude upon the waking world, unsettling both the characters' and the audience's grip upon reality. In 'Ring of Fire' (1.20) Buck provides Gail with visions that reveal the hidden truth about her parents' death. These are waking visions in which Gail is transported to the past, led to the truth by the spirit of her dead brother, killed in the womb when their mother died in the fire. Later, in 'Triangle', Gail is tormented by monstrous visions of her unborn baby, staring out at her from the ultrasound, promising to be the devil child

Lucas wants. While these could be read as Gail's paranoid fantasies, a scene between Lucas and the nurse conducting the ultrasound confirms that all is not right with the baby.

Similarly in 'To Hell and Back' Dr Matt, a flawed but good man struggling with guilt over the loss of his family, is haunted by visions of his dead wife and daughter. Initially these are explained by guilt and exhaustion as he seemingly recognizes the similarities between his patient, injured in a car accident by her alcoholic husband, and his own wife who died because of him. As the visions progress, they seem less the result of a guilty subconscious and more of a literal gateway to Matt's past, signalled by the use of handheld camera and oblique angles suggesting the entry into an alternate reality. This is made all the more tangible when Matt strikes up a bargain with Lucas to go back in time and confront the horrors of his past. This sequence is expressionistic, using tight close-ups, oblique camera angles, slightly overexposed lighting and shallow focus. There is no suggestion of the beginning and end of a dream, rather the dream bleeds into the waking reality.

Each of these episodes invites the protagonists to enter a liminal space between past and present, dream and reality. In contrast to the dream sequences of *Twin Peaks* which draw upon surrealism to convey the uncanny, as discussed in Chapter 8, here the visions overtly project the inner horror of the characters onto the world around them in true Southern gothic fashion. Trinity itself, like the South more generally, is presented as a horror hotspot that draws out the horror from within.

While *American Gothic* consciously positions itself within a tradition of Southern gothic, Alan Ball's adaptation of Charlaine Harris' novel series *The Southern Vampire Mysteries* (aka *The Sookie Stackhouse Chronicles*) is also a part of a long tradition of television vampires that began with Barnabas Collins in *Dark Shadows* (1966–71). Since then the majority of vampire TV series have been largely set in the north. *Buffy, Angel, Kindred: The Embraced* and *Moonlight* are all set in California. *Forever Knight* and *Bloodties* are set so far north they are in Canada, specifically Toronto. With the exception of *Buffy* and *Dark Shadows*, these series are all

urban and largely shot at night, drawing therefore upon a film noir visual style, with chiaroscuro, deep blacks and metallic blues as defining visual elements. Even *The Vampire Diaries*, set in Virginia and making certain nods to a Southern heritage – such as a preoccupation with the 'founding families', an endless stream of Southern festivities, and the occasional reference to slave quarters – is described as being on the border between the North and South. The show contains none of the sultry, sexual and grotesque excess that is associated with Southern gothic, and could be set in Maine or Sunnydale.

True Blood, however, is set in the southern state of Louisiana, infusing the television vampire with the conventions of Southern gothic. Furthermore, the presence of the show on the subscription cable channel HBO presents the Sookie Stackhouse stories with the televisual excess characteristic of this channel. By merging Southern gothic with the style of HBO, *True Blood* creates a new vision of American gothic, shaped through the language of TV horror.

From the opening credits of *True Blood*, this series drips with Southern atmosphere, narratively and aesthetically. While the small town of Bon Temps reels from the arrival of Bill Compton, the first vampire to disrupt its cosy sense of normality, Season 1 reveals that beneath the veneer of southern charm lies a world of drugs and drug-dealing, BDSM, intolerance, religious hypocrisy and murder. During the subsequent seasons, the inhabitants of Bon Temps confront a maenad, shapeshifters, werewolves, werecats and witches. While the maenad is an outsider, invading and corrupting the town's middle class community, much like the vampire in Stephen King's *Salem's Lot*[23], the other creatures are all locally born, reflecting the class and cultural diversity of the South. From voodoo/hoodoo witchcraft to poor white trash shapeshifters, *True Blood* is replete with characters who embody the racial and cultural 'otherness' of the South. While the human characters project their anxieties about otherness onto the vampires perceived as invading their town, the show repeatedly reveals the truth beneath the surface of this Christian community, wallowing in and extolling the virtues of this diversity.

This collision of worlds is captured in the show's iconic opening credits, produced by Digital Kitchen. When commissioning the production of the credit sequence, show creator Alan Ball 'wanted to evoke the earthy vibe of the American South and infuse it with a decidedly dark tone' (quoted in Stasukevich 2008: 10). To achieve this, the title creators juxtaposed images of fundamentalist fervour/hysteria, night clubs and strip joints with images of snakes, crocodiles, insects and decomposing roadkill. While Lisa Nakamura *et al* question whether the series delivers on the promise made by the credits, arguing that issues around race are 'displaced onto the credit sequences' (2009), we argue that the credits do establish an aesthetic tone for the show. Comprised of a combination of archive footage, fictional diegetic material such as the 'God hates fangs' sign and pseudo documentary/home movie footage shot by the Digital Kitchen team while on a road trip through Louisiana, this sequence's disturbing, often hysteric, content is matched by a violent aesthetic. Shot on a combination of formats, including Super8, 16mm and high def, the images are rough, grainy, jerky and interspersed with decaying or melting film stock. The emphasis upon extreme closeups distorts the images, lending them a quality of the grotesque. This contrast in imagery and aesthetics results in an abrasive and disjointed quality, enhanced by the near-hysteric fast cutting. This is gothic excess, and a similar excessiveness in style and juxtaposition dominates the series. Checco Varese, the director of photography for the pilot, explains that in designing the look for *True Blood* he thought that the show 'merited a very different look, something sweaty, hot and sexy which is what Louisiana feels like' and so he saturated the series in colour, making the 'reds red and the greens green' (quoted in Holben, Oppenheimer, Stasukevich and Thompson 2009: 36). Layered on top of this sumptuous visual style is a frenzy of imagery, including sultry eroticism, graphic depictions of sex and violence, hallucinatory visions, comic interludes and action set pieces. While *Dexter*, a parallel example of TV horror produced for pay TV channel Showtime, is coherently conceived and designed to convey an almost artful subjective presentation of a serial killer's world (see Chapter 7), *True Blood* is undisciplined and incoherent. Yet that is what defines

its Southern gothic aesthetic. It wallows in its overabundance of imagery.

The vampires in the series seem equally undisciplined. While Dexter is ruled by the law of Harry, the vampires in *True Blood* are unpredictable. Like the white trash vampires of *Near Dark* the Southern gothic film – that Ball cited at Comic-Con 2010 as one of the best vampire films (Ocasio 2010) – *True Blood*'s vampires are capable of extreme tenderness, love and brutality, and that is what makes them so frightening. Vampires are, by their very nature, liminal creatures, straddling the borders between life and death, good and evil, us and them. Their bodies are abject for, as Julia Kristeva argued, the corpse – or the body without a soul – is the utmost of abjection as it is the human body made waste. Their liminality is a key component of any vampire fiction for their existence is a conundrum, as Bill explains to Sookie: 'I'm dead. I have no heartbeat. I have no need to breath. There are no electrical impulses in my body. What animates you no longer animates me' ('Mine' 1.3). The TV vampire genre recognizes and often emphasizes the abjectness of the vampire body but, due to restrictions upon representation of gore and violence, their abjectness is usually suggested rather than made visible. As Stacey Abbott has argued with regard to *Angel*, the vampire's body is repeatedly under attack, but these attacks are, by the necessity of *Angel*'s broadcast on the WB, presented in a clean and comparatively blood-free way (2009: 61). While scenes lack the emphasis upon bodily secretions that we expect of the abject, they draw attention to the way in which Angel blurs the lines between human and non-human by 'emphasiz[ing] the physical frailty of the human body' (Abbott 2009: 61). In *True Blood,* however, the TV vampire genre is finally able to indulge in physicality of the abject body. Initially, Bill tries to downplay, and in many ways romanticize, his difference from humanity, telling Sookie 'We are all kept alive by magic Sookie. My magic is just a little different from yours' ('Mine').

As the series progresses, however, the abjectness of the vampire body is depicted in increasingly graphic, often grotesque detail. The speed of their movement, particularly when they have sex, as captured in the video footage of Maud having sex with a vampire, is

often presented in jerky fast-motion to underline the vampires' physical difference ('Strange Love' 1.1). Their bodies are not bound by human physical limitations. The series draws upon the classic vampire image of the blood smear around the mouth as a reminder of their abject nature. Their dead bodies can be broken and twisted, as evidenced when Bill has violent sex with Lenora and is able to twist her head completely around causing her pleasure rather than harm ('I Got a Right to Sing the Blues' 3.6). Finally, there is the depiction of vampire death, or 'true death' as it is referred to. With the advent of CGI, the vampire death has in recent years been presented as a spectral demise with vampire bodies burning into ash in the rays of the sun or bursting into sparkling dust. This approach was particularly beneficial to TV vampires as its cleanliness conformed to restrictions upon the representation of blood and gore imposed on commercial television. *True Blood*, however, presents true death as a bloody affair.[24] The first time we see this is when Bill stakes the bartender Long Shadow in order to protect Sookie, triggering Long Shadow's explosion into a pool of blood that pours over Sookie's body ('Plaisir d'Amour' 1.9). This scene is played for shock as it happens quickly and the emphasis is upon Sookie's horrified expression, shot in extreme close-up. In Season 3, however, the 'true death' is shown repeatedly (almost commonly) and far more graphically. The burst of Long Shadow's blood becomes a pool of blood, sinew and tissue, and the horror of the climactic shot of Sookie bathed in blood is replaced by vampire characters such as Russell literally wallowing in grief within the vampire remains.

To further emphasize the incoherence of the vampires, their abjectness is also used to highlight their vulnerability as Bill and Pam both undergo severe and drawn-out torture graphically presented in Season 3. The series draws attention to the vampires' extreme tenderness, weeping bloody tears as when Eric pleads with Godric not to sacrifice himself ('I Will Rise Up' 2.9), while also presenting vampires as both takers and givers of blood, repeatedly shown to be feeding their blood to others sometimes by choice, sometimes by force. They are as much penetrated as penetrating. The vampire in

True Blood is a mass of conflicting and contradictory representations. While their official image as represented by the Vampire League of America is one of self-control and unity, the reality under the surface is, in keeping with Southern gothic, one of excessive sexuality, physicality and emotion.

Does the merging of the vampire with Southern gothic and HBO's televisual excess bring something new to the genre? Not necessarily. If, as Goddu argues, the South is the repository for all that America represses, then the vampire in *True Blood* is a repository for all that television represses within the TV vampire genre. It brings to bear all of the elements, meanings and themes of the genre in a spectacular display of excess, using the vampire as a means to push the boundaries of television by placing all of the text and subtext of the genre out in the open, on our TV screens like never before.

KITCHEN SINK GOTHIC

The British tradition of 'kitchen sink' drama may seem incompatible with fantasy horror yet, like many of Nigel Kneale's pioneering TV dramas or the *John Constantine: Hellblazer* comics, *Ultraviolet* and *Being Human* unite the apparently antithetical British traditions of gothic horror and social realism, resulting in what we call kitchen sink gothic. Both *Ultraviolet* and *Being Human* offer a spin on the vampire that is as interesting for how they uphold conventions (of vampire fictions, of TV drama) as how they diverge from them.

When writer/director of *Ultraviolet*, Joe Ahearne, talks about doing a vampire TV show he alludes to specific national traditions: 'If it's social realism, if it's comedy and if it's period then that's what Britain does but anything else, America seems to get hold of' (2000). He is slightly disingenuous, perhaps, in claiming that '*Ultraviolet* came about when I was trying to come up with an idea for a TV series which wasn't cops or docs or lawyers' since he updates the vampire myth using conventions of crime drama (Ahearne 2000). The show includes investigation, suspense, action and conflicts between work and personal lives, aspects British TV channels might find attractive.

Despite it seeming to arise in response to the success of *The X-Files*, *Ultraviolet* provides, as Abbott has noted, a 'uniquely British' (2010b: 307), version of TV horror at a time when homegrown fantasy was not particularly popular on UK television.

Richard Dyer notes that usually in vampire fictions, 'The mesmerisingly excessive vampire is met by his/her normal, dull but decent antagonists' (1997: 222). Where *True Blood*'s vampires revel in excesses of all kinds, *Ultraviolet* neglects the vampire almost completely, foregrounding instead their 'dull but decent antagonists'. The shift from vampire to vampire hunters dispels overt fantasy elements and plays down the romanticized allure of the vampire still apparent in a contemporaneous film like *Blade* or TV show like *Buffy*. The trope of the reluctant vampire (highly visible in popular culture since the 1970s) is replaced by the reluctant vampire hunter (also present, as Abbott observes, in *Blade* and *Buffy* 2010b: 309), revisiting the heroic version established in Stoker's *Dracula*. Adopting a rather different view, David McWilliam argues that in *Ultraviolet* both humans and vampires 'exhibit a capacity for inhuman cruelty and a willingness to contemplate genocide' (forthcoming). If the reluctant vampire trope allows us to see humanity in the monster, the reluctant slayer, as presented via *Ultraviolet*'s social realism, allows us to see the monster in humanity.

Eschewing the excessive surface detail often found in gothic, and inherent in the 'exotic' Southern locations of *American Gothic* or *True Blood*, Ahearne employs an aesthetic that promotes realism and plays down the supernatural. Many scenes take place in daylight, partly owing to economic limitations ('you couldn't schedule something that was all shot at night', Ahearne 2000), but also working to dispel conventional gothic gloom. Add episodes that feature fertility treatment ('Sub Judice' 3), paedophilia ('Mea Culpa' 4), and vampires dabbling in 'VAT on imports' ('Sub Judice'), and this world is contemporary and utterly mundane. Traditional and modern London locations feature and the occasional gothic architecture of a church or school is matched by ordinary suburbs, inner city high rises and housing estates, pubs, carparks and playgrounds. In other British fantasy, such as *Doctor Who*'s 'Father's Day' (1.8) directed but not

written by Ahearne, mundane locations are the setting for fantastic or horrific interruptions. In *Ultraviolet*, everyday settings are sometimes frequented by vampires, but here the realist aesthetic normalizes the vampire.

The language of medical science also contemporizes and estranges the familiar myth. 'Suppose it were possible to strip away all the tongue in cheek which had overlain the myth through endless repetition,' Ahearne asks, 'What if they really did exist? How would we fight them? Science would be the weapon, not superstition' (2000). The word vampire is never heard as the team comprising Dr Angela Marsh, Vaughan Rice, Father Pearse J. Harman and new recruit Michael Colefield discuss their investigations. Instead 'leeches' functions as a slang term and 'Code 5' is standard, presumably taken from the Roman numeral V (for vampire). Code 5 refers to the 'infection' not to individuals, situating the vampire threat as a disease, a social crisis rather than a personalized menace. The vampire story is readily interpreted as a disease narrative with vampirism a kind of STD, but Ahearne takes this further in *Ultraviolet*, removing the intimacy that often generates horror in vampire fictions and presenting a kind of social horror.

The inclusion of a doctor on the team justifies the scientific language, although Angela is not the only character to use it. 'I think you'll find,' Pearse tells Mike, on debating whether to medically examine a captive vampire, '"autopsy" is the correct term for dissecting dead tissue' ('Terra Incognita' 5). The realist aesthetic also encompasses performance. Susannah Harker explains that her character Angela 'is exciting to play as everything is internalized and the challenge is to hint at the depth of her motivation and the emotion that she is holding back' (Harker, 2010). Such restrained performances are typical and Ahearne argues that *Ultraviolet*'s audience 'bought it because of the actors, because they didn't camp it up and they played it as for real' (2000).

The final episode ('Persona Non Grata' 6) shows a vampire regenerating from a pile of dust in a helix-like swirl of particles that recalls DNA modelling, a neat combination of the supernatural and the scientific. The Latin episode titles are redolent of both science

and religion, bringing the two together, just as priest Pearse and scientist Angie work to achieve the same goal. The emphasis on science also offers alternative spectacle, with the ultraviolet of the title echoed in the cool blue lighting of the team's facilities (see Fig. 6.2). In contrast to the first *Blade* film, which combines blue and white lighting with scenes of blood and violence right from its opening scene, lurid colour, especially red, is avoided. In *Ultraviolet* a simple nosebleed is more disturbing than buckets of gore. Moreover, since everyday technical equipment fails to record 'leeches' who are invisible not just in mirrors, but also on video, cctv, ultrasound ('Sub Judice') or security scans ('Terra Incognita'), operatives require special cameras fixed to their weapons to distinguish humans from vampires. This emphasizes that, as Abbott observes, 'vampires exist outside of our natural world' (2010b: 312), while maintaining scientific rationality and the realist aesthetic.

6.2 Vampire prison in *Ultraviolet*

Vampirism via science is a threat to the whole human population and operates rather like a global conspiracy. 'Parasites don't kill their prey,' the opening episode tells us ('Habeus Corpus' 1), while in 'Terra Incognita' the team discover evidence that vampires are working to

produce synthetic blood (to survive without human food, as they can in *True Blood*). During 'Sub Judice' Vaughan clarifies that vampires do not engage in procreative sex – 'females don't menstruate,' he explains bluntly – and comments like these, figuring reproduction as biology, further dispel notions of vampire romance. Sex is an integral part of the vampire's allure and a long-running serial drama like *Angel* negotiates the vampire as parent, but reproductive sex, perhaps because of 'least objectionable programming' strategies, is generally sidelined. Here, Angie examines a possible vampire pregnancy, revealing, 'The sperm envelope is human but the genetic information is Code 5. What they're after is compatibility with the human ovum' ('Sub Judice'). The way Angela's examination of the pregnant Marion is spliced together with Mike overseeing the exhumation of Marion's supposedly deceased husband visually folds together sex and death and tops anything in vampire iconography because of its direct correlation between sex and (mundane, human) reproduction. The hunting down of Code 5 (in the womb or in the grave) renders human medical science cold and invasive, removing any association with healing or nurturing. This scenario is repeated in 'Persona Non Grata', when Angie experiments on a captive vampire, leaving the audience uncertain where their sympathies should lie.

Ultraviolet thus suggests that vampire hunting tests both the characters' and the viewer's ability to define what human is. 'In the investigations our heroes undertake, there's the risk they may lose their own humanity without ever becoming vampires', Ahearne notes (2000). McWilliam reads this aspect of the show as foreshadowing debates about national security and individual rights post-9/11 (forthcoming). In a reversal of the typical character-driven drama of its era, *Ultraviolet* moves from the personal to the political. Mike's (often rather tedious) personal 'issues' are negligible alongside larger social concerns about institutions, power, regulation and secrecy. The police force accedes to the mysterious team's interference because 'Whoever they are, they've got clout' ('Habeus Corpus'), and vampires and vampire hunters alike deal in real world power, money and influence. Angela threatens a doctor with being struck off in 'Sub Judice' and during 'Mea Culpa' Vaughan brutalizes a suspect, telling

him, 'We're not cops…. We do exactly what we like'. On first seeing the team's facilities Mike asks, 'Who pays?' This is never clarified, but there are hints about government funding ('You're paying, we're all paying … It's a public health issue, a defence issue', Pearse tells Mike) as well as possible backing from the Catholic church ('Habeus Corpus'). The fact that these vampire hunters are civil servants not only positions them in mundane working life but also raises questions about the society they serve.

The rhetoric of defence and protection that runs throughout *Ultraviolet* is common in what Halberstam calls postmodern gothic, which, she argues, 'warns us to be suspicious of monster hunters, monster makers, and above all, discourses invested in purity and innocence' (2006: 27). *Ultraviolet* makes a virtue out of budgetary limitations and trends in TV drama in its reworking of the vampire story. Its aesthetic choices, the lens of realism, sharpens its focus on the seduction of such rhetoric and on the moral complexity surrounding it.

The clinical nature of *Ultraviolet*'s representation evacuates conventional horror elements and subsequently *Being Human* takes a more visceral approach. *Ultraviolet* juxtaposes hunting vampires with day-to-day problems via the conventions of crime drama; *Being Human* adapts the sitcom and focuses on three (then four) different personalities who share a house and negotiate life's trials, including the perils of being a vampire (Mitchell), a werewolf (George, later Nina) or a ghost (Annie).

Its 'realism' is connoted most immediately by setting. Robert Mighall describes how cities need 'a concentration of memories and historical associations' to become gothic (2007: 57), and *Being Human* producer Matt Bouch has discussed Bristol, the setting for the first two seasons, in these terms, noting 'the sense of history living all around you in the architecture, the fact that recently it has been a centre of "counter-cultural" activity' (2010). Moreover, Bristol parallels Southern cities like New Orleans as offering a 'different spatial model' to the traditional gothic city of London. 'The Gothic is found on the edge', Mighall observes, meaning the edge of official national identity and, within the city, avoiding sites associated with tourism (2007: 60).

Being Human also follows the tradition of kitchen sink drama in its non-London setting. The streets of Bristol or Barry are distinctive, and Mitchell faces off with vampire acquaintances in carparks while George is reunited with his parents in a typical suburban bungalow ('Daddy Ghoul' 3.6). *American Gothic* grounds its hallucinatory visions with a colour-palette of earth tones: *Being Human*, like *Ultraviolet*, has its share of dark, atmospheric night-time scenes, but these are balanced by full daylight and representative, thoroughly ordinary locations.

As Bronwen Calvert has pointed out, the shared house in *Being Human* is more than mere setting and 'Though monstrous elements are constantly breaking through, the narrative retains a strong connection with the "homely" and the domestic' (2011). The show engages its audience through the daily interactions of the housemates and their relationships, covering familiar territory from Mitchell and George's 'bromance', or Annie's obsessive tea-making, to dating advice. Yet alongside its domestic realism the show also develops a more graphic, gothic angle. George's werewolf alter ego offers comic potential that often shades into tragedy as he loses control of his sense of self to the wolf. His attempt to regulate its excesses leads to various misunderstandings about why he might want a large cage in his bedroom (2.4). Likewise, when Annie investigates her own death and discovers that her fondly-remembered fiancé killed her, the show refits a classic female gothic trope as a grimly realist depiction of domestic abuse (1.3). The focus of this case study, however, is vampire sexuality, a key element in the Dark Romance boom ranging from the *Twilight* saga to *True Blood*.

Effective immortality makes romance and sexuality problematic for vampires. Any lovers will age and die while the vampire remains the same, as demonstrated in *Being Human* when Mitchell unexpectedly meets ex-lover Josie and she describes him as 'frozen – like a photograph' (1.5). Sex is often displaced onto feeding, two appetites folded together, leading vampire sex to be visually associated with BDSM or non-mainstream sexuality (as when Annie and Mitchell form a threesome that takes a sinister turn in 'The Pack' 3.4). Romance and sexuality remain integral, however, *because* of

these problems. There's no romance like doomed romance and endlessly deferred romantic resolution lends itself to serial narrative. The edge of violence enhances the vampire's allure, and the possibility of redemption through true love keeps the audience guessing. *Being Human's* Mitchell certainly fits the pattern. His long dark hair and high cheekbones embody the die-young-have-a-beautiful-corpse vampire type abundant in popular culture[25]. Unlike the hapless George, Mitchell is usually adept at social interaction, up to and including flirting and seduction.[26] But, as Bouch suggests, 'the combination of the everyday and the extraordinary is the heart of the show's success', (2010); convention is there to be subverted.

Being Human plays with perceptions of reality and fantasy around sexuality. One example is the 'Gay Vampire Man', an unidentified body brought into the hospital (2.2). Doctor Lucy explains that the tag is 'shorthand', like 'Creepy Self-harm Girl, Accidentally Sat on Wine Bottle Man'. That the joking description of the body and its symptoms actually hits the mark – he has been killed by his gay vampire lover – seems like the ultimate irony (although later we find out that Lucy does in fact know about vampires). Moreover, when Lucy quips to Mitchell, 'You have no idea how much a gay vampire would liven up my week', she expresses a desire for excitement in her mundane life and work. Describing how gothic is often critically examined 'as symptomatic of social anxiety', Ellis Hanson presents an alternative proposition: 'What if Gothic were, on the contrary, motivated by a wish that social life could be more traumatic, more anxious, more paranoid, more sexually transgressive and bizarre, more overwrought: in short, more interesting than it generally is?' (2007: 180). *Being Human*'s oscillation between domestic realism and traumatic, transgressive gothic offers both, although the way it negotiates these picks up on more unsavoury aspects of trangressive sexuality.

At various points the show literally matches vampire sexuality with unpleasurable perversion. When Mitchell is sent a DVD of a vampire seducing and then killing a human victim, the three housemates watch it together (1.2). Whether seen as porn or as a vampire snuff

movie, the homemade film suggests both the horror and the attraction of documentary realism applied to the supernatural. More blatantly, while many vampire fictions flirt with paedophilic representation (*Let the Right One In*, *Interview with the Vampire*), few present it with the realism found here. Paranoia about child sexuality, Hanson suggests, is 'arguably the definitive sexual panic of our time' (2007: 179). *Being Human* enacts this panic when Mitchell strikes up a friendship with a young neighbour and mistakenly gives him the vampire snuff movie instead of a Laurel and Hardy comedy (1.4). After this comes to light, Mitchell is taken for a 'sick, twisted lowlife' trying to get 'close to defenceless children', a 'peedo'. He and George are persecuted by their neighbours, who graffiti their front door, overturn their refuse bin, throw eggs at the house, smash a window, protest in the street and inform the police. Watching the stereotypical angry mob in a black and white monster movie, George rants to Mitchell, 'I used to think this kind of stuff was bollocks. Now it looks like something by Ken Loach', a self-conscious summary of the show's repackaging of supernatural fantasy as particularly British naturalistic realism.

In presenting Mitchell as an addict who has successfully lived clean *Being Human* situates him firmly in the contemporary tradition of reluctant vampires from Anne Rice's Louis, to Angel or Stefan Salvatore. This allows him to be victim and hero simultaneously, eliciting sympathy for both his problem and his struggle against it. The narrative, especially in Season 2, juxtaposes the absurdly mundane – vampires admitting their addiction AA-style – with scenes of emotional intensity and graphic gore. By spelling out the sensations of going clean, Mitchell is established as a vampire who desires to feel, to retain humanity. By falling off the wagon and going on a killing spree, massacring a whole trainload of passengers with another vampire (2.7), his edge of danger is maintained and the horror credentials of the show are writ large across the screen in some of its most excessive and spectacular scenes.

Being Human develops the vampire romance trope by so closely entwining Mitchell's vampiric bloodlust with ordinary lust that it becomes difficult to tell them apart: in the first episode he has sex with co-worker Lauren, and then kills her (1.1). His lapse in Season 2

is signalled by heightened sexuality (he has sex with both vampire Daisy and human Lucy) and makes inappropriate sexual remarks to housemate and friend Annie (2.7). In fact, Season 2 suggests that for Mitchell a serious (hetero)sexual relationship is as much about his desire to stay clean as it is about the attractions of his partner. He asks both Josie (in flashbacks to the 1960s) and Lucy (in the present) to save him – folding the contemporary metaphor of addiction and recovery back into the ideal of redemptive female love and establishing a pattern of behaviour that continues into Season 3.

Given its revision of the vampire as alluring and sexualized, it is deeply satisfying that the third season of *Being Human* develops these aspects, presenting Mitchell as a manipulative and selfish serial killer and showing that such characteristics were always present, disguised by the romantic ideal of the reluctant vampire. In the finale of Season 2, Nina irritably tells George that Mitchell is 'a 116-year-old mass murderer not a gerbil' (2.8): the show's combination of realism and fantasy allowed him to be both up to this point. From the start of Season 3, however, he is shown as a mass murderer, increasingly abject and monstrous. Another heterosexual romance, this time with Annie, attempts addiction support, but now its function is foregrounded. In 'The Pack' (3.4) he tells her, 'It's never been about love. It's never even been about lust. It's just, it's just the blood … for nearly 100 years I've been a slave to hunger but with you – you give me reason to take control back over my life'. Although he 'heroically' rescues Annie from purgatory ('Lia' 3.1), Mitchell conceals his role in the Box Tunnel Massacre from her. By the time she discovers it and he admits, 'I want to be punished' ('Though the Heavens Fall' 3.7), this elicits little sympathy from the viewer: his excessive self-pity and continuing denial change our perception of him. All the vampire's negative features come home to roost and Mitchell's role in the massacre threatens to rip the household apart. Given that the premise of the show is to 'Be Human', Mitchell's death at the end of the season provides the only possible resolution. Even then, as Nina points out, 'you can't do it yourself because it won't provide enough anguish'.

Like *Ultraviolet* before it, *Being Human* uses familiar melodramatic tropes and conventions to negotiate individual problems with sexuality, romance, work and sharing a house, and these areas are designed to 'reflect the lives and aspirations of [BBC Three's] target audience', 16–34 year-olds (BBC Three 2010). The way both shows oscillate between the minutiae of everyday experience like cups of tea or worries about romance (the personal) and big philosophical questions about power and empowerment, bodies and embodiment, institutions and individuals (the social) is made possible by the collision of apparently antithetical realism and fantasy. The not-quite-a-flatmates-sitcom elements of *Being Human* co-opt the absurdity of this conjunction as an attraction, revitalizing conventions from modes of realism and fantasy and packaging them in a way that will sell to a youth audience seeking drama that is not only 'thought provoking' but also 'entertaining', in line with BBC Three's mission statement (BBC Three 2010). Examples such as *Being Human* and *Ultraviolet* also demonstrate that horror's visual interest is not necessarily limited to graphic depictions of gore, something examined more closely in the next chapter.

7. The Excess of TV Horror

> Television has really asked the impossible of its handful of horror programs – to terrify without really terrifying, to horrify without really horrifying, to sell audiences a lot of sizzle and no steak.
>
> Stephen King (1981: 254)

> I think 'Grotesque' is a frightening show. I think it is a disturbing show, and I think that's why – for me – it's such a good show. We pulled it off making the viewer feel uneasy … Yeah it was a pretty dark hour of television and I would like to do more of those.
> Kim Manners (producer/director of *The X-Files* and *Supernatural*) on *The X-Files* episode 'Grotesque' (quoted in Edwards 1996: 165)

One of the most commonly cited obstacles against producing horror for television, according to critics, is that censorship regulations prohibit graphic depictions of body horror and violence. In 1981, Stephen King famously argued that 'for the writer, the most galling thing about TV must be that he or she is forbidden from bringing all of his or her powers to bear' (252). To King, at this point television was too restrictive a medium to enable the horror writer/creator to truly terrify. Without limiting his definitions of horror to gore, he argued nevertheless that horror creators require the freedom to push visual boundaries, otherwise it is all 'sizzle and no steak'. The history of the horror genre in both film and literature, however, has vacillated between operating on the level of suggestion (sizzle) and being more graphic (steak). Discussions of gothic literature are often organized

around two distinct traditions: terror and horror. Terror focuses on the imagination, while horror conveys the destruction of the body in graphic detail. Anne Radcliffe, a proponent of terror, argued that '[t]error and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them' (quoted in Botting 1996: 74). These traditions also shape the history of cinematic horror. For instance, the 1960s saw two seminal horror films: the visually suggestive and narratively ambiguous *The Haunting*, and the proto-slasher *Psycho*, replete with bodies, blood and decomposing corpses. These parallel traditions continue in contemporary horror cinema with atmospheric ghost stories *Dark Water, White Noise* and *The Exorcism of Emily Rose* being produced alongside torture porn such as the *Hostel* and *Saw* series. Furthermore, it is disingenuous to suggest that film and literature are not affected by industrial or cultural restrictions, and economic limitations also impact upon cinema production and creativity. The horror films produced by Val Lewton in the 1940s are a testament both to his restrained aesthetic approach to the genre and to the economic and temporal restrictions dictating the production of B-pictures. The horror genre across media has always negotiated these pressures and in so doing continually offers new approaches and understandings of the genre.

This chapter therefore challenges the assumption that graphic depictions of gore are intrinsic to horror by asserting instead that the aesthetics of horror are characterized by spectacle, with visual and aural excess encompassing both terror and horror. Kristin Thompson defines excess as the 'conflict between materiality of a film and the unifying structures within it', namely narrative and character motivation (1986: 132). She suggests that 'the minute a viewer begins to notice style for its own sake or watch works which do not provide such thorough motivation, excess comes forward and must affect narrative meaning' (132). To describe something as 'excessive' or to suggest that style distracts from the plot is often seen as derogatory but with horror it is fundamental, as excess stimulates affect. Fred Botting describes the gothic as 'a writing of excess' (1996: 1): the slasher genre is excessive in its body count and its creative display of

murder, and the works of Dario Argento are excessive in their use of long-take crane shots and overbearing musical scores, to give but two examples. Furthermore, John Thornton Caldwell argues that while American television before the 1980s was marked by aesthetic conservatism, there are traditions of stylistic flourishes. These flourishes were confined to what he describes as 'bracketed' moments or 'altered states', where the 'flourish' can be narratively justified (1995: 53–55). TV horror perpetually exists within altered states and as such its stylistic exhibitionism or excess is not bracketed but is rather a basic characteristic of the genre that predates broader stylistic innovation across television generally. While *Dark Shadows* composes many of its scenes in the tradition of mainstream soap operas, highly expressionist lighting conveyed its gothic atmosphere and it was famous for cutting edge video special effects. Similarly *The Twilight Zone* episode 'Perchance to Dream' (1.9) uses twisted corridors, canted camera angles, fun house mirrors and chiaroscuro to capture the horrific dreamscape in which the protagonist is trapped. Sound is frequently a key element of horror, providing suspense, atmosphere and cues for reading what is happening visually, as in *One Step Beyond*'s 'The Executioner' (3.15) where the howling of a dead dog haunts the characters, or *Sapphire and Steel*'s Assignment Two which builds and maintains its eerie feel almost entirely through sound effects. The rising and incessant noise of the rats in 'During Barty's Party' (*Beasts* episode 6), mixed with the grating radio programme, creates a cacophony that frays the nerves of the audience as well as the characters. Pushing the conventions of how sound is used in TV and in horror often results in stand-out episodes, like *The Twilight Zone*'s famous silent episode in which no dialogue is spoken until the last few moments ('The Invaders' 2.51), or *Buffy*'s Emmy-nominated 'Hush' (4.10).

From the early days of television to the present, industrial and broadcast restrictions encourage horror creators to use stylistic excess to convey the macabre, the abject, the gothic and the uncanny, and to generate fear or unease. This excess, constructed through cinematography, lighting, art direction, sound, special effects and performance, projects, like German Expressionist Cinema before

it, the inner meaning of the genre outward. This is literally the case in *The X-Files* episode 'Grotesque' (3.14), in which a serial killer surrounds himself with monstrous drawings and sculptures of the demon he believes has possessed him and forced him to murder and mutilate seven young men. The episode's theme 'if you want to catch a monster you have to become one', is projected onto the *mise-en-scène* through these grotesque images, as well as through the show's signature low-key lighting. *The X-Files* was renowned for being, as Rhonda V. Wilcox describes 'extraordinarily dark in response to its narrative themes' (2010: 34), capturing the show's preoccupation with the monstrous, the unexplained and the conspiratorial. Cinematographer John S. Bartley acknowledges that he used the perceived limitations of the televisual (smaller screen, shallower depth of field), to keep images dark and unclear, explaining 'you don't want to show the audience too much. You just want to feel that there's something there. It's hard to keep that dark look' (quoted in Probst 1995:32). In this episode Bartley's low key lighting, enhanced with blue filters that deepen the darkest shadows, provides disturbing glimpses of the macabre, and engulfs Mulder in the recesses of a killer's mind.[27] The excessive cinematography and *mise-en-scène* blurs the lines between reality and nightmare and transforms this episode from a formulaic serial killer narrative into horror.

Similarly, *Buffy's* 'Hush'[28] generates fear not simply because we are *told* that 'the Gentlemen' – the 'Big Bad' of this particular episode – are fairy-tale monsters. Instead the fairy tale is evoked through the hovering steadicam that follows the Gentlemen as they haunt Sunnydale, stealing voices and hunting for hearts, and through the Elfmanesque musical score underlying all their scenes.[29] Furthermore, the visual contrast between the Gentlemen's elegant, mannered movements, and their monstrous appearance, with pale skin, black eyes, bald heads, skeletal facial structure and maniacal grins recalling both *Nosferatu* and *Hellraiser*, makes the fairy tale horrific. Finally, horror at its most primal is elicited through contrasting violence with the silence of the Gentlemen's actions: as they pin

down a young college student to cut out his heart, he screams silently. Here the mental anguish expressed in Edvard Munch's expressionist painting *The Scream* (1893) is replaced by the physical anguish of the Gentlemen's victim conveyed through visual and aural excess. In this sequence, the boy's silence makes their attack doubly disturbing. 'Hush' does not show the cutting out of the heart in graphic detail, but makes these actions explicit through other means. First, the Gentlemen slowly remove the scalpel from their medical bag, look at it, hand it from one to the other, twirl it in their hands as the light glints off its chrome surface, displaying the blade for both the audience and the victim and building anticipation (see Fig. 7.1). This anticipation is accentuated when the Gentleman slowly leans down past the camera as the squelching sound of flesh being cut is heard off screen and the image fades to black. The next shot fades in to a close-up of a bloody heart in a jar. Matt Hills and Rebecca Williams argue that in TV horror a substitute often takes the place of the gore that cannot be shown in detail (2005: 207). In this case the squelching sound serves this purpose, matched later by Giles' drawing of the Gentlemen cutting out hearts in which his stick figures spout copious amounts of red blood. All these elements exceed the requirements of the narrative and generate unease and horror.

7.1 'Hush' *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (4.10)

Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 2, the television landscape has changed significantly in recent years and as a result TV is becoming increasingly explicit in its depiction of sex and violence. Thus the conventions of horror are becoming commonplace on mainstream television. For TV horror to be provocative, it must do more than simply be gory. Our case studies, the forensic/serial killer series *Dexter*, the macabre romantic comedy *Pushing Daisies* and the gothic comedy sketch shows *The League of Gentlemen* and *Psychoville*, are innovative reconceptions of TV horror, offering fresh perspectives on the genre and showcasing distinct forms of spectacle through stylistic excess.

DEXTER: THE BODY OF THE KILLER

> Blood. Sometimes it sets my teeth on edge. Other times it helps me control the chaos.
>
> 'Dexter' (1.1)

Body horror has, over the last fifty years, become characteristic of cinematic horror, a genre increasingly preoccupied with threats to the body over threats to the soul. Pete Boss describes cinematic body horror as focused upon 'human tissue in torment, the body in profuse disarray' (1986: 15) while Philip Brophy argues that this disarray is 'conveyed through torture and agony of havoc wrought upon a body devoid of control' (1986: 10). Whether openly on display or not, horror has always featured the monstrous body via examples such as Frankenstein's monster sewn together from body parts, the disfigured, disabled and unconventional bodies in Tod Browning's *Freaks* and the climactic revelation of the taxidermied body of Norman Bates' mother in *Psycho*. As a sub-genre, body horror came into its own in the 1980s with the rise of slasher films primarily focused on creative destruction of the body, and torture porn franchises like *Saw*, *Hostel* and *The Human Centipede* demonstrate its currency in contemporary cinema. From *Frankenstein* to *The Human Centipede*

body horror exploits and expresses cultural anxieties about the 'body devoid of control' (Brophy 1986: 10).

Body horror has, as stated above, also become an increasingly common element in contemporary television. As discussed in Chapter 2, forensic police series, such as *CSI*, *NCIS* and *Bones*, showcase the body in disarray after death under the pretence of piecing together evidence of crime. The quasi-forensic series *Dexter,* however, integrates horror and forensic investigation, offering a hybridized form of horror that never fully renders the body safe. To convey this hybridity, the show knowingly embeds horror genre conventions within its visual style. Dexter works as a forensic blood spatter analyst while moonlighting as a serial killer and, as Simon Brown and Stacey Abbott demonstrate, the pilot repeatedly acknowledges horror tropes and aesthetics even if it eventually reworks these conventions.

> The opening sequence of the series (1.1), in which Dexter stalks his next victim, grounds the show in familiar imagery of urban gothic, beginning with the title card that changes from pristine white lettering against a black background to a more gothic red, followed by a blood-red neon-soaked screen in which the reflection of a full moon appears … [Dexter] is filmed in a series of fragmented close-ups silently observing the people and streets around him, emphasizing not his identity but his point of view, alluding to such classic horror films as *Peeping Tom* as well as the slasher film tradition in which the point of view of the killer is aesthetically privileged. Coupled with the dark undercurrents of the series' haunting music, the atmosphere created in this sequence invokes the horror genre (2010: 210–11).

Similarly, as discussed in Chapter 4, *Dexter* owes a debt to *Frankenstein,* reworking the myth 'where the sins of the creator are revisited upon the creation and give birth to a different kind of monster' (Howard 2010: 61).

Despite this grounding in horror traditions, and despite an episodic structure featuring a new crime and/or body each week (like other forensic series), *Dexter* is unusually restrained in depicting body horror. This is doubly surprising given that most episodes contain two crimes/crime scenes – the one Dexter investigates and the one he stages when he murders his next victim. This does not

mean the series eschews body horror but rather the audio-visual language of excess utilized in *Dexter* is not an expression of disarray but of control, the control of Dexter, the killer, over his body, his needs, his victims, his crime scenes.

This emphasis upon the controlled body is established in the show's opening credit sequence, produced by Digital Kitchen, which begins on an extreme close-up of a mosquito poised on Dexter's arm: he swats it before even opening his eyes. From this opening, Dexter is presented as in complete control of his body and his surroundings. Comprised of a montage of extreme close-ups of Dexter's body during his morning routine, shaving, flossing, preparing breakfast and getting dressed, the style of the sequence conveys Dexter's effort to control his dual existence. Duality is first communicated by Dexter's reflection in the mirror. It is out of focus and his back is to the camera so the audience is presented with two Dexters, both equally unknowable. Furthermore, the image of Dexter pulling his t-shirt tightly over his head and past his face, which does imply suffocation as argued by Angelina I. Karpovich (2010: 34), also suggests a mask. This image calls to mind the opening of the film *American Psycho*, also preoccupied with the morning routine of a serial killer, showing Patrick Bateman peeling away a herbal face mask as he claims 'there is an idea of a Patrick Bateman. Some kind of abstraction. But there is no real me, only an entity'. Like Bateman, Dexter, in this sequence, is carefully constructed from a series of 'normal' actions.[30]

Lurking within these images however, is a sense of controlled danger, reinforced by extreme close-ups of the stream of blood on his neck (the innocent result of a shaving cut), the drops on the white porcelain sink and the cotton tissue absorbing the blood – not to mention the blood orange. Each action – *slicing* his orange, *grinding* coffee beans, *chewing* the steak, *cutting* into eggs – suggests violence, and the excessiveness with which they are shot – in extreme closeup with precise, amplified sound – makes them menacing. They are replete with repressed violence. The close-ups of Dexter wrapping the floss around his fingers, pulling his shoe laces tight, and plunging his coffee, supported by shots of his taut, flexed

muscles convey significant force, but it is controlled force. As Karpovich argues:

> The constant dwelling on extreme close-ups of slowed-down mundane activities produces a conceptual contradiction: on the one hand, it drives home the idea that every single aspect of the protagonist's life, however minute, requires absolute meticulous preparation; on the other hand, the disjointed sequences, rapid cuts, and shaky camera movements produce an overall picture of the morning routine as devastating destruction (2010: 41).

The style of this sequence establishes that Dexter walks a fine line between his 'normal' and 'monster' identities and requires a controlled existence. The series creators later knowingly use imagery from the credits to comment upon Dexter's ability to maintain control in two later episodes. In 'The British Invasion' (2.12) Dexter, having narrowly escaped being caught by the police, wakes up with renewed enthusiasm for his morning routine; shaving, working out and preparing breakfast. The repetition of these familiar credit images, accompanied by the show's theme music, within the context of the episode and the season narrative, shows Dexter's new lease of life but also, after much of the season has depicted his life spiralling out of control, that he has regained control of his dual identity.

In contrast, season four's 'Living the Dream' (4.1), parodies imagery from the credits to convey the impact of becoming a father. First Dexter attempts to swat the mosquito but misses. He then pulls his t-shirt over his head but instead of glimpsing the monster behind the mask, a bleary-eyed Dexter is revealed. No longer the 'neat monster' as he once described himself, in this sequence Dexter yawns, has messy bed-hair and baby vomit on his shirt. When he tightens his shoe laces, he snaps the lace. All this is accompanied by a slowed down, distorted version of the theme music. Dexter has lost control of his life, his reflexes and his body, and will spend the rest of the season attempting to regain this control.

The notion of controlled violence permeating the credits is reinforced by the overall aesthetic design of the series. Like the title logo – Dexter written in red against a white background – the imagery is clean and crisp, with carefully composed blood splashes. The

violence at the core of *Dexter* is literally painted on the wall in the form of framed blood spatter designs displayed in Dexter's office, the test patterns on the white walls of his spatter room, and his use of stringing – the technique of attaching red strings to the blood stain in order to discern the trajectory of the fatal blow – creating a blood-red web design. Rather than overwhelming us with gore, blood is presented as Dexter sees it: a thing of beauty. These aesthetic flourishes recur throughout *Dexter* – and this red-on-white colour scheme dominates merchandising and marketing for the series and is the key feature of the Dexter Dining Room in the Showtime House – a multi media exhibit featuring 'show-stopping rooms of modern design inspired by seven Showtime original series' (Showtime) (see Chapter 10 for further discussion of *Dexter's* ancillary materials).

The series' Miami setting further aestheticizes its violence for, as Dexter explains in the pilot, 'there's something strange and disarming about looking at a homicide scene in the daylight of Miami. It makes the most grotesque killings look staged like you're in a new and daring section of Disneyworld: Dahmerland' ('Dexter'). Crime scenes look carefully composed, with artfully sprayed blood telling Dexter, the blood spatter expert, a particular story. In 'Shrink Wrap' (1.8) Dexter and Detective Batista investigate a crime scene where a woman's body is found naked in a blood filled bathtub with thick streaks of blood splattered on the wall. Her mouth is open and her arm rests neatly on the edge of the tub next to the gun. The narrative (suicide) is clear from the image. In 'My Bandit' (5.2) and 'Practically Perfect' (5.3) Dexter's sister Deborah investigates a series of beheadings. In each case the head has been severed with a machete, the eyes and tongue cut out and the head left in an altar-like position, surrounded by candles and religious icons. These crime scenes are consciously composed by the murderers as a message to others.

This level of composition recalls the artistry of Season 1's Ice Truck Killer who also composed his crime scenes by laying out exsanguinated body parts of his victims wrapped in paper, or leaving individual body parts from victim Tony Tucci in conscious recreations of Dexter's family photos. Similarly in Season 4, the Trinity Killer

stages two of his trifecta of murders as suicides, and positions the bodies to subtly point to a small speck of his sister's ashes that he leaves on the scene. Whereas crime scenes in forensic series like *CSI* and *Bones* show the body 'in profuse disarray' coming under control of the forensic scientist who explains what happened, on *Dexter* the crime scene is presented from the point of view of the killer – through Dexter who looks at the scenes with appreciative eyes – and so the *mise-en-scène* overtly conveys the killers' control. Even the bloodiest crime of passion, like the Coke-head murder in 'Dexter', yields to Dexter's control of the *mise-en-scène* when it has been 'Dexter-ized', through stringing.

Similarly the *mise-en-scène* of Dexter's own kill room is evidence of his complete mastery of his crimes. Brown and Abbott argue that 'Dexter stages his murders as performance art', covering the walls and floor in plastic and adorning the walls with photographs of his victim's victims (2010: 219). This enables Dexter to control and easily destroy the evidence but also to torment his victims with a macabre display of their crimes – a more twisted form of *Rod Serling's The Night Gallery* (see Chapter 5). This provides a perverse justification for Dexter's actions but, like taking a lone blood sample as a trophy, also extends the pleasure of his ritual. The kill rooms offer Dexter a controlled release of his murderous desires. Even costuming plays a part in his ritual. For each murder, Dexter changes from loose-fitting, short-sleeved summer shirts into a tight-fitting brown jersey and black gloves. The top clings to the contours of Dexter's muscles, emphasizing strength as well as stealth, again lending Dexter an aesthetic of control. The significance of costuming to Dexter's ritual is further demonstrated in Season 5 as Dexter mentors Lumen, a rape victim seeking revenge upon her attackers. During 'In the Beginning' (5.10) as they prepare to break into one of the attackers' houses, Lumen, dressed in jeans and a sweatshirt, complains that she's 'not dressed right'. Dexter facilitates her transformation into a killer by giving her a pair of black gloves just like his. Later as they prepare for the murder, Lumen, looking for his approval, emerges now dressed in form-fitting black leggings, grey top, and black gloves, mirroring Dexter's costume. Dexter, transfixed by her image, tells her that she

looks ‘perfect’, before teaching her how to deliver a controlled fatal knife thrust.

The show’s excessive aesthetic of control yields even greater stylistic excess when Dexter loses control. These moments are judiciously used in the series and tend to arise from the blurring of Dexter’s serial killer activities with his domestic identity as brother, husband, or father – highlighting Dexter’s inability to keep his identities separate. In Season 1, the Ice Truck Killer stages a crime scene designed to spark Dexter’s memories of his mother’s murder (‘Seeing Red’, 1.10). The Killer sends the police a jar of blood containing a motel room key. When the police investigate, they find a room filled with blood. As the ‘blood-guy’, Dexter is sent in but when he opens the door and sees the floor, bed and walls drenched in the blood of six people, memories of a child sitting in blood, screaming for his mother come flooding back, causing Dexter to collapse. While the sequence contains no bodies or violence, the image of Dexter falling in slow motion into the blood and then scrambling to get up and out of the room, is highly abject. Blood flows yet again in the last moments of the Season 4 finale ‘The Getaway’ (4.12), when Dexter returns home having finally murdered the Trinity killer and believing that he has regained control over both his home life and his serial killing activities. This belief shatters when Dexter is met by the horrific image of his wife Rita dead in a blood-filled bathtub and son Harrison sitting nearby in a puddle of blood, evoking memories of Dexter’s own monstrous origins. In this disturbingly bloody moment, Dexter confronts the fact that his ability to control all aspects of his complicated dual existence is an illusion. The image of Dexter’s white forensic suit soaked in blood in ‘Seeing Red’ and the literal bloodbath of ‘The Getaway’ are grotesque embodiments of the horror that underpins the show’s colour scheme and aesthetic design. Blood may initially seem to help Dexter ‘control the chaos’ of normal life but as the narrative of *Dexter* unfolds from season to season it becomes increasingly apparent that Dexter’s control is an illusion and the body of the killer is ‘devoid of control.’

PUSHING DAISIES: MAKING DEATH PALATABLE

The mixture of romantic comedy and fantasy in *Pushing Daisies* may seem too mainstream for horror, despite its quirkiness, but the show is notable for its style. Its visual excess lends itself to horror topics and graphic corporeality, while arguably making these acceptable for TV through comedy and a sugar-coating of romance. The show mixes cartoon-like stylization, bright colours and macabre subject matter. All of its elements are excessive: colour, costume, dialogue, narrator/narrative and a genre mix that includes fantasy, horror, film noir, romantic comedy and the musical. Horror often shifts between the mundane and the fantastic but here there is no 'normal life' for the fantastic to disrupt, the whole world is fantastical. Production designer Michael Wylie states, 'My goal was a storybook come to life. I wanted everything to look almost like an illustration' (quoted in Malcolm 2007).

The basic premise of *Pushing Daisies* is that protagonist Ned can bring dead people back to life, but only for a minute before causing tragic consequences (someone or something else has to die, a life for a life). Ned makes and sells pies in The Pie Hole restaurant yet his alliance with Private Investigator Emerson Cod means he also helps investigate suspicious deaths. This sets up an episodic death-of-the-week format and representation of the revived corpse is an excessive, if comedic, body horror spectacle.

Pushing Daisies is described by home network ABC as a 'forensic fairytale'. As already discussed, mainstream TV genres have increasingly co-opted body horror and investigative and medical dramas now offer graphic displays of the abject body. But while *Pushing Daisies*' bodies are superficially 'justified' by the weekly investigation, their main function is as a spectacle of corporeal excess. In this sense, the show's use of the body of the week is more akin to the slasher movie series. Succeeding instalments escalate, as Ian Conrich comments of the *Friday the 13th* films, because there is 'Not only a desire to better the number of killings but the manner of each murder. Style and invention was very much a consideration' (2010: 176). While *Pushing Daisies* is not a gorefest, viewers *are* guaranteed at least one body per episode and Season 2 certainly

escalates in the way Conrich suggests. The bodies become part of the contract with the audience, offering both spectacle and pleasure, each death more bizarre, more graphic, better than the last. Admittedly, an internet search for images finds publicity stills or screen captures that highlight romance and character but the crew seem to agree that the bodies are a main attraction, one suggesting that a 'central theme' is 'the comic, odd way people die' (Daniel Curet in 'The Master Pie Maker' 2009) while make-up designer Todd McIntosh wears a Coroner shirt in a nod to his work on the 'bodies.'

A long tradition of horror comedy and carnivalesque horror predates *Pushing Daisies*. Indeed horror's trafficking in 'the disorienting and even frightening, but also potentially comic, confusion of the real with the unreal' (Thomson 1972: 24) lends itself to affective laughter as much as to shudders. Paul Wells suggests that 'the importance of humour in relation to scare effects' can enhance rather than detract from a perception of the horror genre 'as entertaining' (2000: 27) and *Pushing Daisies'* creator Bryan Fuller alludes to this when he asks rhetorically, 'How do you make it palatable for the audience?' answering, by making it 'as fun and as absurd as possible' ('The Master Pie Maker', 2009). The body of the week is a spectacle of corporeal and visual excess but also a grotesque comic moment, anticipated by the audience and designed to produce laughs. However, it is worth remembering, as Xavier Mendik and Steven Jay Schneider point out, that a combination of horror and humour makes 'intended responses multiple and ambivalent' (2002: 207) and Leon Hunt discusses *The League of Gentlemen* in terms of Michael Steig's theory that the grotesque is 'the managing of the uncanny by the comic' (2008: 83), or a way to partially divert horror.

Season 1 of *Pushing Daisies* treats us to bodies being used as human crash test dummies ('Dummy', 1.2), a man drowned in a vat of hot taffy ('Bitter Sweets', 1.8), and several frozen 'corpsicles' ('Corpsicles', 1.9), one of which smashes into dismembered pieces. However, Season 2 delivers really excessive bodies. Its first episode features a dead woman covered in swollen bee stings: in a surprisingly 'scary' horror moment for the show, bees fly out of her

mouth. ‘I told you not to turn her over,’ says the morgue assistant (‘Bzzzzzzzzz!’, 2.1) (see Fig. 7.2). During ‘Frescorts’ (2.4) the body has been stabbed and when revived, embalming fluid spurts from its wound, its ear, its mouth and (implicitly) its anus, a version of the carnivalesque ‘body that is overwhelmed by its own gestures and secretions’ (Mendik and Schneider 2002: 208). A man who died when a pipe penetrated his head in an explosion is revived in ‘Dim Sum, Lose Some’ (2.5) and, cartoon-like, he tries to flee the room only for the pipe through his head to get caught on the door frame. The death, on stage, of a failed escapologist trapped in rapidly drying cement features in ‘Oh Oh Oh … It’s Magic’ (2.6), while ‘Comfort Food’ (2.8) gives us a deep fried Colonel (‘he’s not just dead, he’s extra crispy’). Finally, ‘The Legend of Merle McQuoddy’ (2.9) offers a ‘fried egg person’, a woman partially melted onto the light of a lighthouse so that, wearing a white slicker and yellow hat, she resembles a fried egg. This body cannot really be topped and the show doesn’t try, although we do subsequently get a 180-degree head twist in ‘Water and Power’ (2.12) and several spectacular death scenes in ‘Window Dressed to Kill’ (2.11).

7.2 ‘Bzzzzzzzzz!’ *Pushing Daisies* (2.1)

Representation moves from horror to comedy as the bodies get more corporeally excessive. Yet any of these examples is 'a body that provokes both laughter and unease in the viewing spectator' (Mendik and Schneider 2002: 208): the pipe-through-head gag may be cartoonish but still makes the viewer wince; the inhabited or leaky bodies of 'Bzzzzzzzzz!' and 'Frescorts' play on typical horror conventions of permeable flesh; and the extra-crispy Colonel tastes himself in a bizarre example of self-cannibalism. We laugh because these bodies are not just absurd but shocking. 'A full response', Thomson notes of the grotesque, 'will not allow the mirth to be blotted out by the horror, or vice versa' (1972: 5). Some deaths are so grotesque that two bodies cannot even speak when Ned revives them (Billy Balsam in the taffy, and the fried egg person, who, as Cod says, has 'a melty mouth' and uses Morse Code to communicate). A second body in 'Frescorts' was hugged to death and her lungs have to be inflated with a ball pump before she can speak.

Another strategy that makes horror 'palatable' here is the use of special effects. While some contend that spectacle suspends narrative, it also 'solicits an attentive and even contemplative viewing' (Pierson 2002: 124) and Wells suggests that pleasure in some horror moments derives *from excess* not from narrative (2000: 28). Commonly, DVD extras or even whole programmes examine design and effects (two of four extra features on the *Pushing Daisies* Season 2 DVD do so: one focusing on the body effects, the other on CGI). Thus, Wells observes that the more effects develop, 'the more an increasingly "knowing" audience recognize their artifice and contrived purpose' (2000: 32). Certainly the whole aesthetic of *Pushing Daisies* is highly artificial and can helpfully distance the viewer from the 'horror' of the graphically absurd corpses.

Pushing Daisies, like slasher movies, offers a series of deaths as spectacle but it also directly addresses how we view death. Funeral parlour viewings are acceptable social behaviour, a grief ritual, yet voyeurs at a crime scene display unacceptable ghoulishness – both feature in episodes. Like *Dexter*, the show consistently focuses on the act of looking at death, although from a different perspective, as well as on responses to it. Two early Season 1 episodes include

funerals, and the plots of several others have crowds of people forming audiences for deaths and/or bodies (at the magic show, the aquacade in 'Kerplunk' 2.13, or in 'Window Dressed to Kill'). 'The Legend of Merle McQuoddy' even features a society called the Notable Widows of Papen County, who make dioramas of their husband's deaths. Horror audiences, clearly, are not the only ones to relish death as spectacle.

The inclusion of taxidermy in Season 2 is a key example of how the show relishes the spectacle of death. Taxidermy is designed to preserve a dead body as a spectacle in itself. Randy Man is a suspect for the murder in 'Frescorts' because taxidermy is his hobby, a nod to Norman Bates in *Psycho*.[31] Representations like *Psycho*, *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* and *The Silence of the Lambs* present monstrous serial killers who fashion art from dead bodies (see Brown and Abbott for a reading of *Dexter* as a different meditation on horror as art). Here, grotesque humour is to the fore: Randy's workshop contains a bear in a tutu, bunnies playing poker and guinea pigs pulling a covered wagon. Randy is innocent and becomes a recurring character but the stuffed animals that accompany his appearances remain grotesque and absurd, all the more so since Ned could bring them back to life (as demonstrated in 'Window Dressed to Kill' when he touches a stuffed rhino to create a diversion). These animals are *dead bodies to be looked at* but it is the juxtaposition of death and happiness that other characters consider inappropriate – a comment on how the show itself operates.

Additionally, more than one regular character in the show was dead and has been revived by Ned's power, leaving them vulnerable to returning to their dead state (just as insects, birds, woodland animals, and the stuffed rhinoceros are revived and then returned to death in various episodes). Ned's dog, Digby, was the first example (when Ned discovered his power); Charlotte 'Chuck' Charles, his childhood sweetheart, is the second. Despite technically refusing any fulfilment of physical romance/sexuality for its romantic leads, these limitations lead Ned and Chuck (and the show) to become increasingly inventive about physical contact. Thus they 'touch'

through the wall dividing their adjoining bedrooms; dance together on a roof wearing protective bee suits ('Pigeon' 1.4); and in numerous episodes hold hands through a rubber glove Ned installs in his car; and kiss through plastic wrap. This might seem like 'escapism at its purest and most delightful', as a DVD blurb puts it (Season 2) but it can also be read as the perverse wrapped as romance, the grotesque affect as uncanny, 'the familiar defamiliarised' (Hurley 2007: 141). What might usually be appropriate physicality for romance is now inappropriate because Chuck is dead (as we are reminded every time Cod calls her Dead Girl), and the romance borders on necrophilia. In one sense it is acceptable because she doesn't *look* dead – aesthetic choices dispel or divert attention from horror. However, Chuck's deadness/liveness inheres in the physical, and her position as romantic lead raises questions about physical and sexual contact with the dead that have been rather differently dealt with in other horror texts (such as *Masters of Horror*'s 'Dance of the Dead' 1.3 or *Deadgirl*).

That Ned's mouth-watering pies are made from 'revived' rotten fruit affords another good metaphor. In a reversal of gross-out horror which aims to make our stomachs churn, this show dresses up disturbing concepts and feeds them to us as delectable treats – literally making death palatable. Horror's visual excess is part of the general aesthetic excess of *Pushing Daisies*, which sugarcoats taboo subject matter in colourful conventions of comedy and romance. As Fuller observes ('The Master Pie Maker', 2009): 'all the sad, pathetic, lonely ways you can die, we just lean towards the comedy.'

COMEDY OF HORRORS: *THE LEAGUE OF GENTLEMEN AND PSYCHOVILLE*

Pushing Daisies dresses up horror as fantasy comedy in order to make it palatable, but the British comedy series *The League of Gentlemen* (*LoG*), and its pseudo-follow up *Psychoville*, adopt the aesthetics of horror to make comedy uneasy. Laughter may be their main aim, according to *League of Gentlemen* writer Jeremy Dyson,

but it is a nervous form of laughter that conveys more shock and disbelief than whimsy or mirth (quoted in Miller 2000: 11). *The League of Gentlemen* began as a comedy sketch show on stage, and later radio, before eventually migrating to television where it ran for three series, plus one Christmas special. As a television series, *The League* became a complicated hybrid of sketch show and serialized comedy, set in the fictional northern town of Royston Vasey. *The League* comprises Mark Gatiss, Steve Pemberton, Reece Shearsmith and Jeremy Dyson, who all write the series: Gatiss, Pemberton and Shearsmith perform the gallery of grotesque characters that populate the town. *Psychoville* is a surreal, often macabre, serial comedy mystery written by and starring Pemberton and Shearsmith. While overtly categorized as comedy by their creators and by the BBC, both series walk a fine line between comedy and horror through their aesthetic of the grotesque. As Dyson explains, 'this is a comedy show, after all. There is an element of darkness in it but that comes from us … Whatever makes us laugh, we put in. We just laugh at some strange things, that's all' (quoted in Miller 2000: 11).

Strange is right. The worlds of these series are populated by an array of characters, actions and events highlighting the line between revulsion and humour that characterizes the grotesque. In her discussion of the grotesque in relation to gothic horror, Kelly Hurley argues that common definitions include 'fantastical, hideous, ludicrous, bizarre, distorted, incongruent and unnatural' (2007: 138), terms that could equally be applied to Lon Chaney's monstrous personas, Jerry Lewis' comic performances, or gross-out comedies from the Farrelly brothers. The grotesque body is by its very nature excessive, exceeding the boundaries of the body through its gross corporality. Comedy is equally excessive, as it does not necessarily serve plot. Rather, plot provides opportunities for comedy or, more specifically, for the comic performer to deliver a larger than life comic act. While *The League of Gentlemen* and *Psychoville* liberally utilize expressionist lighting, gothic locations, and surreal imagery, the grotesque, constructed in comedic performances from Gatiss, Shearsmith, and Pemberton, unites these two forms of excess,

blurring comedy and horror and creating an unsettling generic hybrid. As Hunt argues, 'nervous laughter mixes with audible gasps – *this* is what the "unresolved tension" between the grotesque, the comic and the uncanny sounds like' (2008: 86).

The grotesque-abject body is a significant element of this approach to comedy/horror. Drawing upon the work of Julia Kristeva, Hurley defines the grotesque-abject body as 'a body of fear, but fear tempered by fascination. The abject is like the Frankenstein monster, "the filthy mass that moved and talked" … One cannot bear to look upon it, but cannot bring oneself to look away from it either' (2007: 138). Both series repeatedly draw humour from our fascination and revulsion with the abject body. The opening credits for 'Welcome to Royston Vasey' (*LoG* 1.1), have two businessmen walk past a cleaning woman dumping a bucket of soapy water onto the street, narrowly missing being sprayed before being splattered by a bucket of blood and offal, dumped by the local butcher. In 'The Road to Royston Vasey' (*LoG* 1.2) kind-hearted but hapless veterinarian Dr Chinnery inadvertently gets a dog's lead stuck in the spokes of his bicycle and drags the dog in his wake. Throughout the episode, Dr Chinnery innocently cycles around the countryside with the remains of the dog trailing behind. The second series becomes even more preoccupied with the abject, introducing a serial narrative about a virus causing nosebleeds, leading to numerous comically disgusting moments, as when the entire audience at the Pandemonium Carnival begin to bleed from the nose and the carnival 'freaks' decide to leave Royston Vasey as its inhabitants 'freak [them] out' ('Destination: Royston Vasey', 2.1). The grotesque quality of this running gag is enhanced by repeated extreme close-ups of blood dripping down characters' faces, emphasizing abjection.

Other running gags focus upon grotesque or abject humour surrounding specific characters like the Denton's obsession with bodily functions. These include Mr Denton's repeated warnings not to 'pass solids' in the downstairs bathroom, his creative euphemisms for masturbation (such as 'cavorting with madam palm and her five lovely daughters' or 'shak[ing] hot white coconuts from the veiny love tree') and his attempt to coerce visiting nephew Benjamin to share in

the family ritual of drinking their own urine, culminating in Mr Denton forcing Benjamin to hold a glass while he urinates into it ('The Road to Royston Vasey').

Another running gag surrounds the pre-op (eventually post-op) transsexual cab driver Barbara, who regales her clients with graphic details about her transition. The townspeople seem comfortable with Barbara's position as a transsexual – chatting amiably with her in the cab and saying hello to her as she passes – but her liminal state becomes an object of grotesque humour. Played in body by Paul H. Marshall and in voice by Steve Pemberton, Barbara is televisually constructed from a fragmented series of body close-ups, accompanied by Pemberton's deep, raspy masculine voice. Humour repeatedly derives from the contrast between her pink taxi cab and feminine accessories such as red pumps, gold jewellery and painted fingernails, and her hairy chest and muscular legs and arms, presenting Barbara as an uncomfortable composite of masculine and feminine features. Peter Hutchings argues that 'Barbara's transgendered identity, and the very idea of a male becoming – anatomically at least – a female, is unrepresentable within the terms of the series' (2007: 115). This is precisely because she embodies a physical blurring of gender boundaries as she transitions from male to female. Grotesque comedy is reinforced as she discusses graphic details of the operation, heard in snippets as the episode cuts back to Barbara in mid-conversation, explaining that 'they slice the penis down the middle and invert it', 'they have to open me up first along the base of the scrotum', and 'they won't know about lubrication until they open me up' ('Welcome to Royston Vasey'). The humour comes not only from the abject dialogue but from the uncomfortable reactions of passengers Benjamin, Jeff and Chogue. The second season presents Barabara as even more monstrous after her surgery is botched and even she is unable to say whether she is male or female, disgusting the carnival freaks when they catch a glimpse beneath her skirt ('Destination Royston Vasey').

Similarly *Psychoville* features repeated abject moments designed to evoke both laughter and revulsion: Maureen Sowerbutts offers to soften up her (adult) son David's food by chewing it for him first

('Jelly', 1.3); Joy Aston, under the delusion that a toy doll is a real child, transfuses human blood into the doll ('Robert', 1.6); Mr Jelly, a cynical, one-handed clown screws different attachments into his amputated arm as part of his performance, often terrifying children in the process. Furthermore, the series echoes Browning's *Freaks* by populating its narrative with differently-bodied characters including amputee Mr Jelly, blind Mr Lomax, corpulent Joy Aston, the conjoined Crabtree twins, elderly Claudia Wren, and dwarf actor and ex-midget-porn-star Robert. In the tradition of Bakhtin's carnivalesque body (1984), *Psychoville* exploits the grotesque humour of the body, not purely to debase it, but to challenge traditional notions of the classic body. Like Browning's film (*Freaks*, 1932) it is the able-bodied characters who are truly monstrous: the seemingly gentle and benign Mr Jolly is revealed to be the surgeon who accidentally cut off Mr Jelly's hand before stealing his clown act; Debbie and Bryan play a cruel practical joke on Robert, using his attraction to Debbie to lure him onto the stage, in the nude, for all to see ('Robert'); Edwina Kenchington, a sadistic nurse, tortures patients in the Ravenhill Hospital; and Peter Bishop, the owner of Hoyty Toyty toy shop has an underground sideline in Nazi memorabilia. In contrast, the grotesque, borderline incestuous mother/son serial killing team, David and Maureen Sowerbutts, are increasingly humanized as the series progresses because of their strange but tender relationship. This is encapsulated by David's desire to give his dying mother the one thing she has always wanted to do before she dies. He misremembers what she wanted – 'wine tasting in France' – and instead takes her 'zorbing' (episode 5). The image of the two rolling down the hill in a giant, inflatable ball is both comically grotesque and euphoric. It literally celebrates the world turned upside down.

It is primarily through the performances of Gatiss, Shearsmith and Pemberton that both shows utilize visual and aural excess in its most extreme, exploiting notions of the grotesque. The conceit of playing multiple characters, male and female, in a television series is an illustration of Thompson's notion of excess, deliberately calling attention to the performances. Furthermore, as Hutchings argues about *The League of Gentlemen,* but which applies also to

Psychoville, 'the starting point for most of its characterisations, male and female, is … a physical grotesquerie. This is most obviously the case with the female performances but the male characters too are frequently trapped in bodies that are misshapen or driven by uncontrollable desires, impulses or obsessions' (2007: 117). With the exception of the vampires in *The League of Gentlemen Christmas Special,* the characters are not supernatural creatures. Following in the footsteps of horror legend Lon Chaney, who Gatiss described as 'the godfather of horror actors', the League specialize in playing all too human monsters, grotesque in body and/or soul (*A History of Horror with Mark Gatiss*, episode 1).

Characters run from the disturbed – and disturbing – to the physically and psychically deformed. For instance, Pemberton's Pauline in *The League of Gentlemen* and Hattie in Season 2 of *Psychoville* are female characters distorted by thwarted ambition and unrequited love. Pauline is the leader of the restart course at the Royston Vasey job centre, whose catchphrases ('okey-kokey, pig in a pokey' or 'good morning, Job seekers') barely conceal her contempt for the unemployed. She enjoys mocking their prospects and thwarting their opportunities, as in 'Welcome to Royston Vasey', when she bullies dim-witted Mickey out of going to a job interview because he has not finished the part of the course that will tell him how to get an interview. Hattie is a lonely make-up artist who agrees to marry Shahrouz, the gay lover of a friend, in order to prevent him from being deported, and then becomes obsessed with her wedding and marriage, presumably because this is her one opportunity to marry. She overplans the wedding, wears a full wedding gown and veil to the civil ceremony, then chains Shahrouz to her radiator and forces him to pose for wedding photographs and perform other, off-screen, conjugal duties (episodes 3, 4 and 5).

The monstrousness of both Pauline and Hattie emerges partially from their actions – the image of Hattie 'consummating their marriage' by masturbating in bed next to a sleeping Shahrouz is cringe-inducing – but also from the way Pemberton plays them as extreme distortions of femininity (episode 3). His masculine body lends the women a corpulence that makes Pauline matronly and

Hattie garish and overbearing. Stella Bruzzi argues that cross-dressing comedies like *Some Like it Hot* and *Tootsie* highlight anxieties about gender boundaries while re-asserting notions of masculinity, usually through heterosexual romance (1997: 149). In *The League of Gentlemen* and *Psychoville*, these actors are not playing men pretending to be women, rather they play women in a way that merges their masculine features with feminine make-up and costuming, blurring gender boundaries. The comedy and the horror of these characters, along with those performed by Shearsmith and Gatiss, therefore emerges from the exaggerated manner in which they are played, or 'overplayed' by men. As a result they have more in common with the pantomime dame, a character that Shirley Ardener argues is 'grotesque and outrageous' (2005: 127) and their 'ambiguous gender identities' draw the audience's attention because 'we are uncomfortable with uncertainties' (130).[32]

This discomfort is enhanced by the actors playing each character, male or female, as excessive – physically, mentally and sexually. Gatiss' Iris, the working-class housecleaner, regales her repressed boss Mrs Levinson with tales of her husband Ron's voracious sexual appetite, while Gatiss plays the unemployed Mickey as overwhelmingly stupid, thinking that the capital of France is 'wine' ('The Road to Royston Vasey'). The seemingly incestuous Edward and Tubbs in *LoG* are excessively local, evoking traditions of rural horror, discussed in the previous chapter, in which communities fear intrusions from outside, responding with primal violence. Their monstrosity is conveyed through physical signifiers of inbreeding: both their comically disturbing piglet style noses (based upon Chaney's make-up for *The Phantom of the Opera*), and Edward's sharpened teeth (evoking Chaney's vampire in *London after Midnight*) suggest recidivism. The excess of the performance, both in terms of self-indulgence and their gross physicality, enables these characters to walk the line between comedy and horror, evoking laughter and shudders simultaneously.

The spectacle of the grotesque is best conveyed by characters overtly embodying the spectacle of the carnival, specifically Papa

Lazarou, the Circus Master of Ceremonies in *LoG*, and Mr Jelly, the clown in *Psychoville*. Both characters, played by Reece Shearsmith, represent the comic perversion of innocence. Lazarou's Circus MC (who appears as Santa Claus in the Christmas special) is transformed into the stuff of nightmares through Shearsmith's full minstrel-style black face and guttural voice as he spouts unsettling catchphrases such as 'Hello Dave … You're my wife now'. Lazarou is a primal horror out of childhood nightmares (Hunt 2008: 86-87). The cigar-smoking, vulgar and angry Mr Jelly of *Psychoville* is similarly a cynical distortion of the supposedly jolly children's entertainer. The clown, with its painted smile, baggy clothes and enlarged hands and feet, generally represents the grotesque rendered safe and comic, but the image maintains an element of the disturbing which has been maximized for horror through the Joker in *Batman*, Pennywise from *It* (see Chapter 4) and the killer clowns of *Buffy*'s 'Nightmares' (1.10) and *Supernatural*'s 'Everybody Loves a Clown, (2.20). In Mr Jelly's clown court nightmare sequence ('Jelly'), clown make-up is made monstrous through extreme closeups, canted angles and wide angle lenses that distort the image of jolliness that the clown supposedly represents. This surrealism escapes into the waking world at the clown funeral that opens the second series, in which the usually joyful clown parade becomes a sombre funeral march accompanied by slowed down, distorted brass circus music ('episode 1'). These sequences capture the skill with which both series utilize grotesque spectacle to highlight how comedy is built on the monstrous and the horrific. Rather then render horror safe, however, *The League of Gentlemen* and *Psychoville* wallow in comic discomfort.

Instead of reinforcing the notion of TV Horror as restricted by censorship and broadcast limitations, *Dexter, Pushing Daisies, The League of Gentlemen* and *Psychoville* demonstrate, through their fresh perspectives on horror as art, comedy and the grotesque, a break from the limiting equation of horror with gore. By exploring the potentially unlimited palette of visual and aural aesthetics available within television – whether in the form of performance, art direction, costuming or special effects – these series re-imagine what horror is or can be.

8. Horror, Art and Disruption

> exploration of the camera's potential to transform the familiar world, and thus to create surreality
>
> (Kuenzli 1996: 3)

> To the extent that the series [*Twin Peaks*] transgressed the rules of its genre, it was inferior television; but to the extent that it conformed to and reinvented those rules, it was television at its best.
>
> (Dolan 1995: 451)

Masters of Horror's 'Cigarette Burns', directed by John Carpenter, debates the power of art and the controversy that often surrounds both experimental art and the horror genre. Verbal and visual references include avant-garde high culture like Igor Stravinsky's ballet *Rite of Spring*, early art cinema such as F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu*, and cult director Dario Argento's *Profondo Rosso*, demonstrating how different kinds of 'art' are valued for different reasons. Protagonist Kirby runs an arthouse cinema and has a sideline tracking down prints of rare films for collectors, who value 'extreme images' and valorize 'obscure film makers'. The story follows Kirby's search for *La Fin Absolue du Monde*, a film so powerful it has rarely been shown: when it is, violence overtakes the audience. The story implicitly addresses the argument that screening violence incites violent and horrific behaviour, and it combines an often dream-like style with increasingly graphic images. Donato Totaro selects the 'audacious scene' where the collector threads his

own intestines through a film projector as a moment that best represents *MoH*'s – and implicitly, the genre's – investment in gore (2010: 89). 'Cigarette Burns' is set in the world of cinema and *MoH* itself, as discussed in previous chapters, valorizes film directors despite its home on TV. Given the rise of TV horror, however, it might be possible to imagine a similar story concerning a lost TV episode so shocking it was never screened (see Kerr on Miike's instalment for *MoH*). While horror is often defined by gore and splatter, even on TV, at the other end of the spectrum are productions that delight in surrealism and strangeness, evoking the fantastic through art-house emphasis on visuality. This chapter explores TV productions that link horror and art in these ways.

We are not using the term art horror as Noël Carroll does in *The Philosophy of Horror*, where he distinguishes 'art-horror' from natural horror (what might be called real world horror) by defining it as 'the product of a genre' (1990: 13). Carroll's analysis 'depends on a cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions' (35) and focuses on the monster as threatening and impure. This chapter argues, more broadly, that the distinction between what is mainstream and what is art, between low and high culture is unclear on television. Both high art and low horror frequently spark debates about censorship, taste and acceptability; both are located outside the mainstream. Horror is often powerful, controversial and emotive. So is art. Joan Hawkins notes that European art cinema has had a similar trajectory to exploitation cinema in US history (2000: 21) to the point that people see art as horror and horror as art. TV horror often straddles the high/low culture divide and as a genre horror blurs these distinctions, something all of our examples demonstrate.

Shows such as *Twin Peaks*, *Riget* [*The Kingdom*] and *Riget II*, and *Carnivàle* challenge rigid notions of genre and offer alternative versions of 'quality' or 'art' in television. *Twin Peaks* exaggerates the surreal and the absurd in everyday life and uses both sound and imagery in innovative ways for television. *Riget* is undoubtedly influenced by *Twin Peaks* yet, less obviously surreal, it provocatively combines banal TV conventions and genres with arthouse direction and editing to produce uncanny, graphic horror. *Carnivàle*, the last of

our case studies, approaches art TV from yet another angle, blurring the real, the hyperreal and the surreal, period drama and fantasy, to render both history and myth.

As Chapter 6 demonstrates, shows like *Being Human* use realism to naturalize horror monsters yet it is also possible for the uncanny to defamiliarize the everyday, to make the mundane horrific. Cynthia Freeland describes how the uncanny hinges upon 'something from ordinary life that has a mysterious and familiar feel yet becomes alien and frightening' (2000: 235). The surreal and the uncanny both refigure or disturb what we see and how we see it. Hence Rudolf Kuenzli's comment about surrealist practice being an 'exploration of the camera's potential to transform the familiar world, and thus to create surreality' (1996: 3). Anyone who has seen *Un Chien Andalou* knows that this strategy can produce haunting, horrific images: an eye being slit with a razor is one of the most famous. All three case studies use the camera to transform the familiar, albeit in different ways: some partake of surrealist imagery, others make use of the uncanny.

Each also disrupts conventional forms, mixing 'low' culture TV styles and genres with 'high' culture arthouse approaches. Kuenzli describes how 'optically realistic effects … hook the viewer into the world portrayed by' early surrealist films, noting that 'Only through the viewer's identification with the familiar world invoked by the film can the film's sequential disruptions of that invoked familiar world have the potential to disrupt the viewer's symbolic order and open up the suppressed unconscious drives and obsessions' (1996: 10). Resistance to linear narrative and conventional pacing (markers of realism in some genres, see, for instance, *The Wire*) allow shows like *Twin Peaks*, *Riget* and *Carnivàle* to hypnotically unfold imagery and sound, rather than sequential plot, foregrounding their style. Moreover, all these shows subvert conventional TV genres. *Riget* and *Twin Peaks* reshape the hospital drama, the soap opera and the detective story. Von Trier was influenced by documentary-style hand-held camera (in *Homicide: Life on the Street* and *NYPD Blue*) and chose both a style and a setting for *Riget* that connote 'realism' but present supernatural and uncanny events. *Carnivàle*'s mix of

documentary realism and the fantastic is demonstrated in its opening credit sequence where works of art, tarot cards and newsreel images blend into each other.

Even the way such shows address the viewer blurs boundaries between art and low culture-exploitation: *Riget* episodes have von Trier appear at the end, like the host of a horror anthology show, speaking to the viewer and commenting on episodes. Both David Lynch and von Trier were associated with art cinema before making their landmark television shows. The fact that they did make successful television suggests that that either TV or horror (or both) is well placed to subvert distinctions between art and mass culture. *Twin Peaks* attracted large audiences in the USA and UK (the premiere of its pilot episode pulled one of the biggest BBC Two audiences to date, see Kaleta 1993), despite its 'difficulty' and 'art' elements. *Riget* also drew a substantial audience in Denmark (see Stevenson) and was popular abroad; its fame spread through exhibition at film festivals, where it was edited together forming a long cinematic feature[33].

The fantastic elements of horror allow it to engage with surrealist and oneiric representation in ways that would be impossible for other genres, often producing striking imagery. Episodes of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* ('Restless' 4.22), *The X-Files* ('Audrey Pauley' 9.11), *True Blood* and *Kingdom Hospital* (the US remake of *Riget*) depict other states of consciousness: dream spaces that are not meant to appear realistic. 'Audrey Pauley' shows agent Monica Reyes trapped in such a space while her body lies in a coma following a car accident (a scenario *Kingdom Hospital* also picks up). Its parallel narratives of Doggett's concern for his partner and the uncovering of medical malpractice situate the episode in the 'real' world of relationships and lawsuits, but juxtapose this, in inimitable *X-Files* style, with a representation of other realms that unsettles what we thought was real. In several of our examples strange and surreal imagery *is* the story, and visions are highly significant (Cooper's dreams and Sarah Palmer's visions in *Twin Peaks*; Ben and Justin's visions in *Carnivàle*). These are, however, held in tension with representations

of the everyday, often leading to absurd comedy, which can be read as a strategy to contain disturbing elements of surreal art horror.

Horror's preoccupation with visualizing the body also often leads horror to represent or explore monstrosity. Hawkins argues that Tod Browning's 1932 film, *Freaks*, set in a carnival and featuring real sideshow 'freaks', amply demonstrates the blurred line between exploitation and art horror. The carnival functions here, and subsequently in TV horror, as a symbol or strategy (turning the world upside down, reversing normality) but additionally it is a setting for striking visual (and aural) representation, helping constitute certain TV shows as art, at the same time as incorporating the uncanny and/or grotesque. All of our case studies mix strange characters with conventional TV types to achieve a similar effect. Among its small-town stereotypes (unruly teens, upstanding sheriff, scheming businessmen and women) *Twin Peaks* includes bizarre characters like the Log Lady. *Carnivàle* focuses directly on a carnival and its 'freaks', investing its carnival with both backstage realism and supernatural surrealism.[34]

Freeland suggests that uncanny films 'prompt a complex cognitive and emotional response of appreciation for the kind of worldview they represent', that such a film – or, we argue, TV show – has 'an aesthetic power in the way it requires us to feel repulsion or dread, to "see" and reflect about the horrors it so evocatively presents' (2000: 239). All of the shows examined below evidence this aesthetic power to provoke reflection. TV horror as art encourages concentrated viewing, challenging the glance theory of TV. In their varying approaches to horror, to the sur/real, and to the uncanny, our examples complicate notions of art horror as challenging, as authored, and as quality.

TWIN PEAKS: TV SOAPS AND THE 'KING OF WEIRD'[35]

David Lynch and Mark Frost's *Twin Peaks* has been the subject of much critical, academic and fan discussion, categorized as a

quintessential example of postmodern TV drama (Page 2001: 44); an influential illustration of specifically American gothic TV (Ledwon, Chapter 6 in this volume); and as a key moment in the evolution of cult television, owing to its 'quotable dialogue, quirky characters with visual motifs, and a certain amount of visually impressive cinematography which drew attention to itself' (Booy, 2010: 28). It also stands as a transitional point in the evolution of American quality television, described by Robert J. Thompson as the programme that 'changed the face of television' (1997: 152). While it did not last very long, cancellation in its second season contributing to its cult status, it represents a moment when networks began to look for programmes that were 'more different and more unexpected' – and perhaps *Twin Peaks* was *too* different and *too* unexpected – paving the way for series such as *Northern Exposure, The X-Files, Buffy* and *Lost*, which also pushed the boundaries of cult and mainstream television. As Miles Booy argues, however, these programmes 'took from it [*Twin Peaks*] the lesson that a fan culture could be a useful component of a larger audience but they found that larger audience … by softening the program's harder edges' (2010: 30).

The harder edges Booy mentions are the series' ambiguous narrative structure, delayed resolution, philosophical explorations of the nature of evil, unexplained juxtapositions, oneiric atmosphere and aesthetic experimentation. Grounded within well-established televisual traditions of soap opera and the detective genre, as well as the literary tradition of American gothic, the show twisted generic conventions and narrative formula to its own surreal and artistic ends. While the soap opera and detective genre in particular are, respectively, defined by narrative forward progression and the clear resolution of a mystery, *Twin Peaks* shares the anti-narrative qualities of cinematic surrealism which, according to Carl and Diana Royer, 'toy[s] almost recklessly with linear narrative, and, … use[s] shocking or disturbing imagery to create a sensory dislocation in the viewer' (2005: 7). *Twin Peaks* undermines the conventional narrative drives of soap and the detective genre by wallowing in stillness and frozen moments – repeated shots of the ceiling fan, the street light, and wind blowing through the trees – and weaves new mysteries into any

resolution. At the end of episode 2, Cooper has a dream about the murder. He wakes up and calls Sheriff Truman, informing him that he knows who killed Laura Palmer. At the beginning of episode 3, Truman arrives at Cooper's hotel to find out who did it, only to be told that Cooper can't remember: his dream is a 'code waiting to be broken … break the code solve the crime'. While this statement suggests a logical close analysis of the dream, the end result is anything but straightforward. The dream code is not solved through logic, objectivity or deductive reasoning, but through further clues, riddles and visions. *Twin Peaks* provides no easy answers to these riddles but instead immerses its audience, like its main protagonist Cooper, within the riddle itself, working their way through the show's surreal vision of small-town America.

The surrealism of *Twin Peaks* unsettles the audience on a number of levels. First the town of Twin Peaks is presented as a space where the strange and unusual sit comfortably alongside the quotidian. Not only is it populated by bizarre and eccentric individuals – such as the Log Lady, who speaks in riddles, and Nadine, who sports an eye-patch, possesses super-human strength and has an obsession with drape runners – but, as Michel Chion points out, 'the madness lies in the way they do not seem to surprise or disturb characters' who are coded as 'normal' (2006: 102). While comical at times, this is also highly unsettling, suggesting that the normal rules – of TV, genre, life – don't apply. Anything can happen, and viewers are removed from their comfort zone.

Secondly, the series offers an alternative, surreal view of the heart of Americana, the small-town, that stands in opposition to the American ideal. Rather than present this alternate view through the visual language of the gothic – expressionist lighting, distorted architecture – *Twin Peaks* wallows in surreal juxtapositions, unbalanced compositions, discordant sound and visual aesthetics designed to disturb pastoral and community harmony.

By directing the pilot as well as significant episodes throughout the series, Lynch established an aesthetic language of surrealism, which was perpetuated by the other directors. Repeatedly, the show broke general televisual rules, particularly those associated with soap

opera, for naturalistic aesthetics by introducing discordant aesthetics designed to disturb and to undermine genre expectations. Most famously, for the dream sequences in the red room (more on those below) Lynch got his actors to perform their dialogue and movements backwards, filmed them and then played the sequence in reverse, creating disjunctive body movements and uncanny speech, comprehensible but also 'other'.

In episode 14, Lynch uses sound to build anxious anticipation for both the revelation of the murderer and, unbeknownst to the audience, the murder of Laura's cousin Maddie. The episode begins as the police prepare to take Mike, a spirit guide who professes to know 'Bob' the evil spirit presumed to be responsible for Laura's death, to the Great Northern Hotel to identify the killer. Dissolving from a long shot of the town's iconic waterfalls to a model of them in close-up, the camera tracks back and to the right slowly past Mike and then out into a long shot as individuals are brought before him to identify. The sequence is accompanied by a strangely repetitive thudding noise, later revealed to be a troupe of sailors bouncing rubber balls through the hotel lobby. It climaxes when hotel owner Benjamin Horne enters and Mike wails in pain and collapses on the floor as the sound of the bouncing balls, Mike's moaning and a subtly rising discordant musical score create a noisy cacophony. This curious mixture of sound is both grating and disturbing.

This contrasts with the gently melodic recording of Louis Armstrong's 'What a Wonderful World' that accompanies a subsequent scene in the Palmer residence as Maddie informs her aunt and uncle that she will return home. However, sound and image in this scene are curiously juxtaposed. While the music suggests tranquility and happiness, the camera movement follows a similar style to the previous sequence, beginning with a close-up of a painting, slowly tracking to the right, past photos of Laura on the mantelpiece, to reveal the Palmers sitting in long shot at the back of the frame. The camera does not move in close as one would expect but continues to slowly track through the living room. The framing of the Palmers is off-centre and obscured by the classic stereo in the foreground of the frame. This unusual framing is unsettling and is

transformed into full-blown horror when we return to the living room later in the episode. After Benjamin Horne has been arrested for Laura's murder, the episode cuts back to the now-empty living room, where the turntable still revolves, the needle stuck in the centre groove. Lynch shoots the living room from a series of unusual angles, including a ground level tracking shot along the carpet. The scene then cuts to a low angle close-up of the stairs as Mrs Palmer crawls down head first, seemingly in pain, calling for her husband. No explanation is given, but the unconventional framing and the grating sound of the record spinning builds tension and tells the audience that something is wrong in this house. It prepares us for the revelation that the murderer is Laura's father, Leland Palmer. Thus, Lynch and his fellow *Twin Peaks* directors created an aesthetic of surrealism that contrasts the tranquil, beautiful images of trees and waterfalls that appeared weekly in the show's credit sequence.

The disturbing qualities of the show's aesthetic innovations and surreal juxtapositions culminate in *Twin Peaks'* evocation of visions and dream-states throughout the series. While shows such as *Buffy* and *Supernatural* are set in a world in which monsters and demons exist and there are rules for how to deal with such horrors, the world of *Twin Peaks* has no such assurances. As Lynch explained, sometimes it is the things we 'don't have names for' that are all the more frightening (quoted in Rodley 1997: 178). Where American gothic traditionally suggests a dark underworld lurking beneath the civility and propriety of the American small-town, *Twin Peaks* explores the uncanny and liminal world that exists between the conscious and subconscious, in which reality is infused with the qualities of dreams and nightmares.

To this end, as well as being the source of striking imagery, dreams and visions play a major role in the narrative of *Twin Peaks* and are repeatedly used in the murder investigation. Maddie and Mrs Palmer describe their visions of Bob to the police; Cooper explains that the Tibetan rock-throwing experiment he uses to narrow the range of suspects came to him in a dream; the Log Lady recounts her log's vision of the night Laura died; and episode 3 climaxes with Cooper's dream of the red room where he meets a dancing dwarf,

known as the Man from Another Place, and Laura Palmer, who whispers the name of her killer in Cooper's ear.[36] Cooper treats these dreams and visions as a valid part of his investigating, no different than witness testimony, finger prints or DNA tests. Even Albert Rosenberg, an FBI forensic expert, tells Cooper, 'Go on whatever vision quest you require. Stand on the rim of the volcano. Stand alone and do your dance. Just find this beast before he takes another bite' (episode 16). While this may suggest that surrealist dream imagery serves linear narrative rather than undermining it, Lynch and Frost use this imagery to unravel the boundaries between dream and reality. While Cooper claims that the murderer will be found by unlocking the meaning of his dream, his dream serves more broadly as a bridge between conscious and subconscious. From this point onward, the dream seeps into the real world, transforming the reality of Twin Peaks into a nightmarish reverie.

8.1 The giant *Twin Peaks* (2.1)

The second season immediately demonstrates this seepage. Cooper, lying in a pool of blood after he has been shot, sees a giant

who tells him three riddles (see Fig. 8.1). Is this giant a hallucination brought on by blood loss; is he the vision of a man on the border between life and death; or is there a giant in Cooper's room? The series provides no clear answer but the giant appears to Cooper twice more; in episode 14 just before Maddie is murdered and in episode 16 as part of a series of visions that reveal to Cooper that Leland Palmer murdered his daughter. In each case the lighting dims, and the giant appears as if Cooper has passed into a parallel dimension – when Cooper asks where the giant came from, the giant answers, 'the question is where have you gone?' Both times, the giant appears in the Road House, standing before a large red curtain evoking the red room of Cooper's dream. In episode 14, everyone else fades away so that only Cooper sees the giant, while in episode 16, other characters are captured in a freeze frame, frozen in time, as Cooper again sees the dancing Man from Another Place and finally hears Laura tell him that her father killed her – before the giant once again appears. In these sequences the surrealism of Cooper's dream world merges with the real world murder investigation but overwhelms it by providing a resolution that defies rational explanation. Leland Palmer may be the murderer but Cooper's surreal method of investigation suggests that Leland was possessed by the demon Bob, raising the question, 'Which is easier to accept?' That a demon murdered Laura and Maddie, or 'that a man would rape and murder his own daughter' (episode 16)? Episode 16 brings the narrative strand about Laura Palmer's death to a close but it does so with questions rather than answers.

The dream world also creates a space in which the barriers that restrain emotion are broken down. Here, the surrealism of *Twin Peaks* allows for a hybrid of melodrama and horror, leading to the expression of primal emotions uncharacteristic of mainstream TV. This is best exemplified by Maddie's death scene (episode 14) in which horror is bookended by melodrama as Cooper, Truman and the Log Lady, as well as high school students Bobby Briggs and Donna Hayward, listen to the dreamy and melancholic tones of singer Julie Cruz at the Road House. Mid-performance, the band disappears and the giant materializes, telling Cooper 'It is happening again' before

the scene dissolves, into the Palmer living room. Maddie's death remains one of the most brutal murder scenes produced for television, juxtaposing graphic violence (Leland punches Maddie in the face and slams her head into the wall) and Lynch's increasingly surreal manipulation of space and time. Via jump cuts and dissolves, the scene repeatedly shifts back and forth between Leland and Bob as murderer, showing the monster within the man. The use of slow motion and distorted sound, jarringly intercut with shots at normal speed, not only extends the brutality but also conveys Bob's primal hungers, Maddie's abject terror and the shocking physicality of violence. Furthermore, the emotions expressed here – Bob's primal bloodlust, Leland's grief as he cries for Laura and Maddie's terror – are unrestrained and consequently all the more terrifying. The return to the Road House and the music after Maddie's death replaces one type of primal emotion with another as Cooper, the Log Lady, Donna and Bobby all experience a moment of abject sadness. Donna cries uncontrollably and Bobby looks around with an expression of deep sorrow; neither understanding what they are feeling. Cooper stares at the stage, all too aware that something has happened and he was unable to stop it. While this sequence was heavily criticized for its violence, its power lay not in its graphic qualities but rather the surrealist aesthetic that tapped into and exposed primal emotions, conveying humanity's inherent duality – simultaneously capable of great evil and great empathy.

Twin Peaks is one of the most experimental examples of TV art horror, embracing surrealism right up to its ending, twisting televisual and genre convention to its own narrative and emotional aims. The final episode climaxes with a sixteen-minute sequence set in the red room, now revealed to be the Black Lodge, that abandons narrative purpose – rescuing Cooper's girlfriend Annie – in favour of exploring the duality of evil. This is *Twin Peaks* at its most surreal: unapologetically abstract, unsettling and downright terrifying at times. The audience is confronted with uncanny imagery, disjunctive juxtapositions and discordant, sometimes grating, visual and aural aesthetics. In the Black Lodge, Cooper faces his own dark side as he is pursued from room to room by a maniacal doppelganger. The

revelation that the Cooper who escapes the Black Lodge is in fact his evil double is an unsettlingly open point upon which to end the series. While *Twin Peaks* was cancelled and therefore was not intended to end here, this conclusion reinforces the show's surrealism, favouring haunting imagery – Cooper smashing his head into the mirror and mockingly repeating 'How's Annie?' – over narrative resolution. It undermines narrative by ending on a shocking horror moment but also draws upon the horror of narrative seriality, leaving Cooper forever trapped within the surreal, nightmare world of the Black Lodge.

RIGET I AND II: *DR KILDARE* MEETS *TWIN PEAKS*

Describing Lars von Trier's *Riget* as '*Dr Kildare* meets *Twin Peaks*' (Jensen 2003: 132) identifies bizarre juxtaposition as a main ingredient but says little about how *Riget* might be art horror. Like *Twin Peaks*, *Riget* blends established TV genres with uncanny horror, as comprehensively parodied in *Garth Marenghi's Darkplace* (never quite as funny or as horrific). The prologue that accompanies each episode fits notions of horror (the hospital site's history is intoned over a dark, misty scene, blood bursts from the walls), yet the title sequence is typical of medical drama, with fast-paced music and a rapid montage of images. As Glen Creeber observes, the viewer is 'immediately provided with two generic points of view', or a 'clash between two opposing cultures' the spiritual, and the scientific (2004: 59).

As creator von Trier points out, a hospital 'also has a lot of inherent value as the setting for a soap opera. People die and babies are born. Doctors in white coats casting [sic] glances at beautiful nurses above their surgical masks' (quoted in Björkman 2003: 147). This conventional setting does double duty as a liminal space where birth and death, past and present meet. Many other examples of TV horror identify the hospital as a liminal space. *The X-Files*' 'Audrey Pauley', mentioned in the introduction above, uses the hospital as a place which exists in different planes. During the *Torch-wood* episode

'Dead Man Walking' (2.7), Jack explains that hospitals exist on the fringes of life and death – and the hospital is stalked by death. Episodes of *Buffy* ('Killed by Death'), *Supernatural* ('My Time of Dying') and *Being Human* also draw on the notion that death literally manifests in hospitals, making them a regular site for horror. In *Riget* both genre inflections co-exist. Pain, suffering and death are facts of hospital life for students and staff, as well as for patients: in 'Thy Kingdom Come' (episode 2^{37}) Mrs Drusse is asked to sit with a dying patient, while in 'Death on the Operation Table' (episode 5) Dr Helmer cheerfully describes his job as, 'Disease, misfortune and misery all day long'. Medical malpractice also provides 'real' horror, including a young girl left with brain damage after an operation; Helmer trying to scam a patient into donating his tumour to medical research ('A Foreign Body,' episode 3); the uncovering of ghost Mary's story about experiments on patients; and bets taken on how fast an ambulance can be driven down the wrong side of the road (*Riget II*). Even this selection indicates how the absurd and grotesque frequently collide.

The hospital also provides a physical location suitable for horror. While the standard establishing aerial shot of the hospital shows a regularly-shaped building, it is generally represented as labyrinthine, a version of the gothic haunted house, influenced, von Trier notes, by the Louvre in the 1965 TV mini-series *Belphégor* (Bainbridge 2007: 64). Creeber suggests that the hospital's spatial organization situates the elevator shaft as vertebrae (2004: 61) and the basement archive as repressed memory/ history (62). Shots of the elevator shaft in particular evoke the uncanny, the familiar made unfamiliar (as with the ceiling fan or street light in *Twin Peaks*), the ping of the elevator signalling a return from horror to hospital drama. That this terrible place is a public building, a place of science, emphasizes, as von Trier says, that it is 'a modern building with an old ghost' (quoted in Anderson 2003: 95).

If this sounds like fairly conventional genre-splicing, *Riget* distinguishes itself as art TV and art horror through formal experimentation. 'Despite its overt play with grotesque and sensationalist elements of "lower" popular cultural forms such as the

soap opera', critical acclaim aligns *Riget* with quality, as Caroline Bainbridge observes, and von Trier's status as an art film director adds authority to this positioning (2007: 68), although he co-directed the TV series with Morten Arnfred. Matt Hills points out that in this way '*The Kingdom*'s horror-genre-based representations were partly licensed by reference to von Trier's authorial vision', and Hills sees von Trier's appearances (commenting on each episode as the end credits roll) as a form of 'programmed auteurism', an attempt to 'textually prop up and sustain its legitimacy as authored TV' (2005a: 127). Stephen King's reworking of *Riget* (*Kingdom Hospital*) used King's name to sell the show, offering it as a more mainstream form of horror (as outlined in our discussion of King in Chapter 4). Both present TV horror as authored, and the 'name' guarantees some form of 'quality'.

Despite its concern with the supernatural, *Riget*'s style connotes naturalism. This is, as von Trier readily admits, influenced by contemporary genre drama on TV, mostly detective shows using hand-held camera to provide immediacy and dynamism as well as a sense of documentary authenticity. Stevenson describes the show as having the '*stylised* look and feel of video' (2002: 82, our emphasis), presumably because it is shot on 16mm film and made to *look like* video. Likewise, Creeber suggests that the fantastic elements undermine this appearance of documentary realism (2004: 58), discussing how the '"antique" or *distorted* quality of the actual print is perhaps suggestive of another world altogether' (61, original emphasis). The very first shot of *Riget* is grainy CCTV footage of an old ambulance, Stretcher Van 12, that mysteriously appears at the hospital doors ('The Unheavenly Host'). Along with the sepia tones of general shooting, such stylistic choices simultaneously connote both realism and uncanny horror, depending on whether we read style or content.

Editing also diverges from established conventions. Von Trier says he wanted to 'dismantle psychological continuity' (quoted in Stevenson 2002: 84) and directed 'new motivations, and new positions' for actors in new takes of the same scene, which were later edited together ignoring the usual continuities (155). The influence of

Homicide is evident here, and in violations of the 180 degree rule: actors are often filmed from either side of the 180 degree arc, so that their positions appear to change in the edited-together footage. Transition to horror in the second elevator scene of 'The Unheavenly Host' is signalled by non-naturalistic camera movements and editing. A series of jump cuts zoom out from Mrs Drusse looking at a dislodged ceiling tile, then the tile quivers and the camera moves outside to the lift shaft. Brigid Cherry describes the shock cut as 'an editing device designed to emulate the actual, physical experience of a moment of shock' (2009: 85), a visceral jump or startle characteristic of horror (86). *Riget*'s style does not return to a more 'invisible' mode until the uncanny atmosphere is shattered by the voice of the engineer enquiring why Mrs Drusse pushed the stop button. While the second set of effects are more conventional for horror (like the green tint used in *Riget II* to suggest demonic influence), both disrupt naturalism. Such stylistic choices break continuity, drawing attention to themselves and thus to the show as a deliberate, artistic construction.

Moreover, the framing of the show itself is deliberately non-naturalistic, with several elements commenting on it from an outside perspective. Regular observations from a man and woman washing dishes in a basement kitchen function as a kind of chorus. Not quite looking into the camera, but addressing the audience as much as each other, they offer pronouncements such as 'events keep repeating themselves/ It's spooky' ('The Unheavenly Host') and 'The wicked will laugh, the good will cry' ('The Living Dead' episode 4), which imply an omniscient viewpoint, as well as commenting on how they function as story, and as horror ('it's spooky'). In addition, von Trier's commentaries highlight theatricality: red curtains (reminiscent of *Twin Peaks*' red room) hang behind him as he speaks directly to camera, and in 'Gargantua' (episode 5) he appears holding the bloody sarcoma excised from Bondo's body. The resemblance to announcements preceding classic horror films, or 'warnings' about the 'film you are about to see' from producers and directors like William Castle or Alfred Hitchcock, seems intentional. That von Trier concludes rather than introduces episodes wrenches the audience

from contemplation of the dramatic events just witnessed into a mode that discusses their significance *as drama*, encouraging further discussion after the broadcast. 'Maybe you think the story is predictable and depressing', he says following the second episode, 'If so, look at your own life'. Hills argues that these appearances work to 'aestheticize (and thus make culturally "safe") this drama as TV horror' (2005a: 127).

Riget also functions as art horror through representation that is both graphic and unsettling. Von Trier confesses, 'I'm probably not really interested in evil *per se*, but in people's dark sides' (quoted in Björkman 2003: 197). This focus on 'people's dark sides' juxtaposes supernatural and real horror in the unfolding story. Time slips are a feature of the show, embedded in a location which layers past and present, as explained by the prologue. The ghost of Mary and the birth of Little Brother both derive from past human evil (the experiments of their father Aage Krüger). In the finale of the first series, 'The Living Dead', two photographs of Aage, one from an old newspaper, one from nurse Judith's recent affair with him, are overlaid so that a single focused eye appears out of newsprint dots, unsettlingly visualizing the presentness of the past. Horror is also accessed through dream spaces and liminal zones (a feature extended in remake *Kingdom Hospital*). The hospital has a sleep lab, and student volunteer Mogge is shot from above and upside down in 'Thy Kingdom Come' to denote the disorientation of dreaming. In 'A Foreign Body' and 'The Living Dead' his dreams of being eaten alive by crowds of people are rendered in gory detail. During *Riget II* Mrs Drusse sees visions of Mogge's head on a platter (a chilling reversal of an earlier prank when he stole a head from the morgue). These horrors are safely contained within dreams and visions and *Riget* does not employ the oneiric imagery found in *Twin Peaks* or *Carnivàle*, yet at times the supernatural materializes in the real world. As Mary's story unfolds in the first series, ghosts from the past become increasingly real in the present – more people see Stretcher Van 12, Bongo the dead dog accompanies Mary's phantom, and the dishwashers talk about the building crying ('The Unheavenly Host') suggesting the intangible is taking physical form.

This reaches its ultimate expression in Judith's uncanny pregnancy and the birth of Little Brother (as he is known in *Riget II*). At first, the pregnancy is presented melodramatically: it is a reason for Hook to suspend his romantic interest in Judith and when she tells him about it, she stresses that the relationship that caused it is over. Then, when she has a scan during 'A Foreign Body' her stomach has visibly grown, and it is suggested that it must be at least 25 weeks, not 11, since the start of the pregnancy. By 'The Living Dead', only a day later, she is told she is at least 38 weeks pregnant, and Mary's ghost pats Judith's stomach, waiting for her brother to be born. The finale of *Riget* is the birth scene, intercut with an exorcism that opens a rift between the natural and supernatural. While ghosts rampaging through the hospital corridors seem rather absurd, in contrast, the all-too-real birth scene details horrors: bulging skin, rupture, breaking out and a full frontal shot of the 'baby' (with Udo Kier's full-sized head) emerging from a gaping vagina. His unnatural growth rate condemns Little Brother to a painful existence and eventual death. In *Riget II* Judith tells Mrs Drusse during 'Gargantua', 'They say he'll die. That he is growing straight into death', and his grotesque body elicits extreme pathos as well as revulsion. Bainbridge suggests that *Riget* takes 'a form that circumvents traditional modes of horror by masquerading as melodrama/soap opera' (2007: 74) but these abject and grotesquely surreal images extend rather than circumvent modes of graphic horror.

Bainbridge also argues that there is no eerie *mise-en-scène* in *Riget*, that 'the domain of the spiritual is depicted as part of the ordinary, everyday concerns of those inside the hospital' (2007: 72). Certainly when Mrs Drusse sets up a séance with fellow-patients in 'The Unheavenly Host' a handkerchief placed over the lightbulb to provide appropriate lighting mixes the spiritual and mundane, as does her admission to son Bulder later: 'Imagine spending a lifetime trying to contact the spirit world – and then succeeding in a lift – without even meaning to!' During 'Birds of Passage' (episode 6) she has Bulder wear a hand-printed cardboard sign inviting the spirits to meet her 'for coffee' so she can find out more. Thus, the juxtaposition of the mundane and the uncanny, while a guiding principle in *Riget*, does

not preclude 'eerie *mise-en-scène*'. Rather, the use of genre conventions such as graphic representation of body horror or suggestive camera work sit alongside unsettling breaking of conventions of staging and continuity and, layered together, they blur distinctions between standard TV melodrama or comedy and horror.

CARNIVÀLE: SOCIAL SURREALISM

Creeber argues that far from being unrealistic, fantasy drama on TV enables the presentation of a universe 'in which social reality itself is continually set against subjective, individual and multiple perspectives', (2004: 14) describing this as social surrealism (15). Set in the United States during the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl, HBO's short-lived drama *Carnivàle* looks like social realism, but it presents a surreal vision of America's past by collapsing history and mythology together, incorporating documentary-style realism and attention to period detail alongside bizarre visions and a mythic battle of good and evil. Adam Lowenstein argues that what he calls the 'allegorical moment' in modern horror films 'disrupts the realism/modernism dichotomy by partaking of the real without adopting "naturalized" realism, and by partaking of the abstract without mandating a modernist aesthetic of absence and self-reflexivity' (2005: 15). *Carnivàle*, however, incorporates naturalized realism *as well as* modernist and surrealist art aesthetics, leading creator Daniel Knauf to describe the show as '*The Grapes of Wrath* meets David Lynch' (Knauf). In *Carnivàle*, history and realism function as the ordinary, made uncanny by interplay with fantastic and surreal elements.

The surreal and uncanny both work to refigure, to disturb what we see and how we see it, as noted earlier. A surreal or uncanny perspective also disrupts conventional forms and David Marc notes that in *Carnivàle* 'the story is told in visual language bearing little resemblance to the naturalistic techniques that dominate the narrative genres of American television and film' (2008: 103), a deliberate choice producing a hypnotic unfolding of imagery.

Carnivàle's historical consultant, Mary Corey, comments on the mix of realism and fantastic elements:

> the eerie surreal-ness of the carnival is really mirrored in the culture, in reality … you have a world that's in a kind of emotional chaos, where people are de-centered and ripped off of their moorings. And I think that the show – visually and intellectually and narratively – really mirrors that. Reality is ripped from its moorings (Corey).

The show consistently explores that which is apparently normal, ordinary, historical, alongside that which appears freakish, extraordinary, mythological. Because it is, despite HBO's slogan ('It's not TV, it's HBO'), still TV and serial drama, it does this through the development of two main characters, Ben Hawkins and Justin Crowe.

Actor Nick Stahl, who plays Ben, suggests that Season 1 can be read as a story of 'self-realization' ('The Making of *Carnivàle*' 2005). Similarly, some-time director Rodrigo Garcia describes how thematic concerns are balanced by focus on character: 'good and evil … that's a very vast concept … But what interested me was the conflict of these two people who don't know who they themselves are' ('The Making of *Carnivàle*'). In this way, *Carnivàle* deals with familiar territory for television drama. The sense of national crisis apparent in the 1930s setting is layered with the personal struggles of Ben, a young man who joins the carnival after his mother dies, and 'Brother' Justin, a Methodist preacher, and with upheavals in their respective communities. Bruce Lenthall argues that developing communications technology meant that 'During the Great Depression, many Americans first found their lives tie into an unfamiliar, vast and abstract world. And during the Great Depression, many Americans began figuring out how they would inhabit that world' (2007: 5). Here, the show's two protagonists gradually discover how their individual experiences 'tie into an unfamiliar, vast and abstract world' in a historical and a fantastic sense.

Carnivàle has a large ensemble cast but Ben and Justin focus what linear narrative it has, taking centre-stage in its mythology. The opening sequence of the first episode outlines this mythology and amply demonstrates the juxtaposition of surrealism and realism.

Viewers are quickly cued that Ben may be the 'creature of light' mentioned in this mysterious prologue when he heals a young girl during the first episode ('Milfay'), making the pious Justin by default the 'creature of darkness'. The two form a symbiotic pair, an interesting study of the extra/ordinary. Justin, the preacher, is supported by his sister and important to his community, championing the people and adapting to change as he ministers to his flock. In contrast, Ben's mother dies as we first meet him and the chain around his ankle suggests he has escaped from a prison work detail. Joining the carnival positions him as an itinerant social outcast and he resists the changes that happen around him. Ben is the epitome of the helpless Depression victim. The carnival troupe first encounter him as he digs a grave for his mother in a scene that echoes famous photographs of the Dust Bowl by Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans and other artists commissioned by the Farm Security Administration (FSA) to document farmers' experiences during the crisis, and to provide images for press coverage or public education.[38] The unfolding of this scene in 'Milfay', showing a huge tractor destroying Ben's family home, derives directly from an episode in John Steinbeck's 1939 novel *The Grapes of Wrath* and its rendering in John Ford's film adaptation.

While scenes of harsh social realism appear throughout the show's two seasons, a period drama aesthetic softens their effect. The painstaking attention to detail found in well-executed period drama is evident, despite a rather different atmosphere, offering another form of pleasure. 'You know, in a show where glass shatters and eyeballs bleed, leeway is available', says Corey, 'But in terms of what the carnival was like, and what their lives were like, and what they wore, and what they ate, and how they slept, and their cars and all the material culture, it's impeccable.' This is a 'costume drama' even if it is not a feel-good, nostalgic view of the past. Heritage drama may now cover serving-classes, rural life and industrial history, as Linda V. Troost points out (2007: 87) but doesn't usually include conjoined twins, 'cooch' dancers or midgets, and American TV rarely uses actors who don't look like 'underwear models' (Knauf). That

Carnivàle does can be chalked up to the HBO effect: this is TV for adults, history more gritty than might be acceptable on mainstream TV. Here the past offers neither escape nor safety for the viewer, even if it is familiar. In fact, the very familiarity of some images has its own effect – we are watching a version of history that has already been mediated for us and thus it becomes hyperreal. How many viewers can remember these events? What we remember are the powerful FSA photographs, art as much as documentary, or the images evoked by *The Grapes of Wrath*, novel or film.

Discussing Vietnam protests and 1970s film, Lowenstein draws on Lauren Berlant's concept of the media tendency to 'facialize', put a '"face" on an otherwise abstract issue', (2005: 125), an idea that aptly describes Ben's function in *Carnivàle*. Just as Ford's film folds the universalizing interchapters of Steinbeck's novel into its story of the Joad family, here Ben is an 'ordinary' person caught up in events beyond his control, an ideal focus for audience empathy. Justin, older and already established in his community, directly contrasts Ben's vulnerable uncertainty. Ben's chain is another echo of *The Grapes of Wrath*, which opens with Tom Joad, escaped convict, returning to his family home. While Tom finds his family before they set out for California, Ben is adrift from the start: his mother dead of dust pneumonia, their house gone. Much of Ben's metaphorical and geographical journey is an attempt to locate his father, the enigmatic Henry Scudder. Ben only gradually comes to find out that Scudder *is* his father, though he sees him in dreams and visions from the first episode.

The visions present a montage of images: some prefigure events to come or show past events that characters find out about. A very brief montage at the beginning of the first episode contains images which resonate throughout both seasons, including a chase through a field of corn and a tree silhouetted on the skyline. Certain images are repeated over and over (the tree even features in another recurring image, that of the tattooed man), calling attention to their uncanniness and to their significance in the show's mythology. Varying film speeds further underline the disorienting effect of the visions and even a vision of the past, such as Ben's dream of World

War I trenches during 'After the Ball is Over' (1.2), becomes surreal through sound, lighting (images are illuminated by shells detonating), and the appearance of a bear wearing a red hat. The brief glimpses the visions provide enact a familiar strategy of TV horror, that of suggestive rather than fully graphic imagery, exemplified in 'Alamagordo, NM' (2.2) when Ben visits Father Kerrigan, a priest who knew Scudder, in an institution. Father Kerrigan does not answer Ben's questions about Scudder but when Ben touches him, he 'sees' flashes of Scudder conducting some kind of ritual, painting with blood on a floor, while a naked Kerrigan cowers against a wall and tears at something bloody with his teeth. None of the images are explained, and none are detailed, with close-up used to obscure specifics. The surrealism of Ben's visions, violent and disorientating, is balanced, however, by the emotional realism of serial drama – a character finding out who he is. The story of a son seeking his absent father lends itself to both melodrama and archetype, at home in fictions from soap opera to *Star Wars*.

On the one hand, Ben's association with the carnival positions him as a social outcast; on the other, his ordinariness is highlighted against a background of carnies, 'halfwits, whores, and two-bit freaks' as one character comments unsympathetically ('Creed, OK' 2.5). We do not have the scope here to do justice to the topic of representation (see Folk), but this is particularly evident in Season 1, where Ben often stares at the carnival's performers with the same awe and disbelief as the 'rubes'. The audience understands, long before he does, that he is at home here. Lodz, the blind seer, Apollonia the catatonic, telepathic tarot reader and the mysterious unseen Management all know more about Ben and his role than he does, and they sense his power. In *Carnivàle* the unusual (tarot readings, freaks) becomes normalized through the everyday lives of the carnies, but the surreal visions are also experienced by Ben and Justin *as* surreal and eerie. Their discovery of their powers and possible roles in the battle of good and evil is a prime example of the uncanny as anti-sublime. Eric Bronson notes that the show's representation here supports 'the belief that most religious experiences must take place outside of organized religion and are

usually met not with peace but with crushing isolation and abandonment' (2008: 139). Both Ben and Justin experience such alienation because of their visions.

Like other reluctant TV heroes, Ben wants to be normal. He sees his healing power as a burden rather than a blessing, and refuses to accept who he might be. When he finally meets his father, Scudder tells Ben, 'I never wanted to be a part of this madness. I just wanted peace and a family. But you can't just up and quit. You can't run away from who you are' ('Damascus, NE' 2.7). His words apply equally to the mythology and the history invoked by *Carnivàle.* While Justin accepts that he is the avatar of evil, Ben resists, trying to cling to humanity. Yet his uncanny power means he cannot be normal, and flashbacks to his childhood show how it estranged him from his strictly religious mother ('Milfay'). It also blurs moral distinctions, since to give life or heal, there must be a death or a taking of life-force (as in the first episode when Ben heals a girl and the crop in the field around her withers and dies). The mythological battle between good and evil provides a structure of meaning for the show, but ironically, it also undermines meaning. Justin, a poor immigrant made good, embodies the American Dream but becomes the American nightmare. Ben wants to be the average Joe and we sympathize with his humanity and his doubts, not his power and heroism.

'It is possible', suggests Marc, 'that HBO launched *Carnivàle* as a probe to see just how far a premium cable series could push the aesthetic envelope' (2008: 101). There are limits, perhaps, but the show does not tell us a story, rather, it presents images that make us feel. It does this in the same way that FSA photographs of the 1930s transformed documentary realism into art, not so much recording the real historical moment as putting a face to the national crisis, simultaneously aestheticizing it and inspiring empathy. *Carnivàle's* deliberate echoing of famous images like the FSA pictures or Ford's film adaptation of *The Grapes of Wrath*, additionally renders its representation of history hyperreal, already repeatedly mediated for us through art. Simultaneously, *Carnivàle* uses bizarre, surreal imagery to evoke the disturbing, visceral affect of horror. It therefore develops distinctive 'art' strategies for representing the mystical, but

within a framework that heightens the fantastic by contrasting realism, hyperrealism and surrealism. Lowenstein describes the films of David Cronenberg, which similarly mix art and genre elements, as consistently unmasking 'the alienation, exclusion, and violence that were always part of the everyday exchanges between private and public that the self and the nation depend upon' (2005: 146). Whether we watch *Carnivàle* as realism, or as fantasy surrealist horror, it accomplishes the same goal, visualizing the response of individuals to changes in history, in national community, and in moral concepts.

Unlike *Twin Peaks* and *Riget*, *Carnivàle* does not play with TV form and convention: in fact, Marc uses it to demonstrate the lack of genre in some successful HBO programming. However, all three case studies stretch the possibilities of TV drama as an art form by presenting distinctive, haunting imagery and soundscapes, and by negotiating the real via the surreal or the uncanny, disrupting the familiar world and making it appear strange and often horrifying. Our next chapter explores how TV becomes a more literal portal to other worlds, and how television technology itself is often the subject of TV horror.

9. TV as Horror

> The ‘fatal television’ story enters the mainstream.
>
> (Bernice Murphy 2009: 129)

> We’re kind of distracted by a lot of entertainment in this day and age, and obviously in vaguely making that point, what I’ve really done is create a zombie-romp that will further distract people from whatever might be more important in their lives. I’ve basically made the problem worse.
>
> (Charlie Brooker)

In the 1982 film *Poltergeist*, the television is presented as the central point of ghostly activity within a modern American home. Five-year-old Carol Anne wakes in the middle of the night, walks downstairs to the living room where her father has fallen asleep in front of the television, now finished broadcasting, and begins to talk to the snow-filled screen, hearing voices that no-one else can hear. The flickering light from the TV casts an uncanny glow over the conventional suburban living room, telling us that this is more than childish imagination. The next night, Carol Anne again wakes up, crawls over to the TV in her parents’ bedroom and, as she leans forward to touch the screen, a spectral hand emerges. Her parents wake up and Carol Anne turns away from the TV to announce the presence of ghostly spectres with the now-famous statement ‘They’re here’.

This representation of the television as a portal to ‘other worlds’ goes back to the early days of TV when a new technology that plucked images from the ether and broadcast them in the home was

perceived as decidedly uncanny. Furthermore, the menacing quality that director Tobe Hooper and producer Steven Spielberg attribute to the TV in *Poltergeist* is in keeping with perceptions of it as both a wondrous and a frightening presence in the home. In 1951 Richard Matheson captured this anxiety in a short story 'Through Channels'. As narrated to the police by a clearly traumatized teenage boy, a family repeatedly sees the word 'F-E-E-D' appear on their television screen but do nothing about it because they assume it is some new form of advertising. One night the family is brutally murdered in front of the TV and when their bodies are found, the word 'F-E-E-D' transforms into 'F-E-D.' Jeffrey Sconce recounts similar, if less homicidal, real-life accounts of uncanny TV from the 1950s. For instance, in 1953, a family from Long Island reported that while watching the children's programme *Ding Dong School* a woman's face appeared on screen and stayed there for over a day even when the TV was turned off and unplugged. The family eventually turned the TV to face the wall as the image was scaring the children (Sconce 2000: 1-2).

These stories and anxieties about television are, however, nothing new. Stories, fact and fiction, that blur the boundaries between new technologies, science and the supernatural circulated long before television. Photography in the nineteenth century was perceived as both a scientific tool able to document evidence and an uncanny technology able to photograph the invisible. Spirit photographers claimed that cameras could capture images of ghosts while Sir Arthur Conan Doyle famously made similar claims about fairies. New technologies are inherently uncanny because they challenge our established understanding of the natural world.

When Bernice Murphy states that 'the "fatal television" story enters the mainstream' with *Poltergeist* (2009: 129), she slots the film into a tradition of suburban gothic and identifies TV as a characteristic of American life. In taking her words as an epigraph to this chapter we suggest that telefantasy and TV horror continues to represent the television as a potentially malevolent portal despite the fact that it is no longer a new, spectral technology. TV holds a commonplace position in the home, yet in shows as diverse as *Ghostwatch, Angel,*

Doctor Who, Life on Mars, Ashes to Ashes and *Being Human,* it still acts as a gateway to another world. Contemporary TV horror continues to represent TV *as* horror as a means of expressing our changing relationship with domestic media technologies. As TV becomes less uncanny and more ubiquitous and banal, an everyday amenity of modern life, it becomes the perfect counterpoint to the uncanny or supernatural. Helen Wheatley suggests that the TV screen sometimes acts as a window (providing a view to outside), and sometimes as a mirror (reflecting interiors) (2006: 106), and this chapter analyses the ways in which TV is a prime site for horror because of its function as a conduit, a network, an interface, and because of its reality effect.

This book has countered the notion that TV, a domestic, mainstream medium, is incapable of producing horror. Catherine Johnson notes that the British serial *Quatermass* 'challenged the homely address of much of the BBC's television output' back in the 1950s (2010: 151), but the assumption that TV is the nadir of banality persists, and underlies several contemporary TV horror references. Including a real soap opera, *Passions*, in various episodes of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* enables the show to naturalize vampire Spike, an avid follower of the soap. His enjoyment of *Passions* demonstrates his human appetite and trashy taste, and allows him to bond with both Watcher Giles and with Buffy's mother, Joyce. Joyce Summers, despite her middle-class liberal values and upscale employment (she runs an art gallery), might stand as the stereotypical female consumer of soap opera. However, bookish Brit Rupert Giles is coded as all-but-ignorant of popular culture, so his admission to Buffy, 'I watched *Passions* with Spike. Let us never speak of it' ('Real Me' 5.2), signals how far he has fallen after losing his job as school librarian and having his teenage charges grow up. (Matthew Pateman expands on Giles' relationship with TV in more detail, 2008). Alternatively, *Twin Peaks*' fictional soap opera *Invitation to Love*, a highly melodramatic serial with exaggerated acting, usually functions as a metacommentary on how *Twin Peaks* itself uses the conventions of melodrama. *Doctor Who* episode 'Forest of the Dead' (4.9) offers a slightly different version of this when the Doctor's companion, Donna,

is transported into a world where time seems to shift oddly. As director Euros Lyn points out, 'time, in Donna's world, jumps exactly in the same way as it jumps on television' so 'when a scene cuts, time has moved on' (for example, she tells her children it's bedtime and immediately finds herself in their bedroom with them wearing pyjamas). Here, the conventions of TV editing produce an uncanny effect rather than naturalistic continuity because attention is drawn to them, and Lyn comments that writer Steven Moffat was 'keen on us to use normal televisual kind of grammar to' highlight this ('River Runs Deep', 2009).

In a more extended example of TV as both uncanny and metacommentary, *Supernatural*'s 'Changing Channels' (5.8) shows Dean and Sam trapped in a TV hell, moving from one banal TV offering to another, including a brightly coloured sitcom, a medical drama ludicrously called *Dr Sexy M.D.*, a Japanese gameshow (in Japanese) and even advertisements. All of these lovingly reproduce the style and conventions of the different televisual formats (and of specific shows like *Grey's Anatomy*, *CSI*, or *Knight Rider*) as well as contrasting with the predominant aesthetic of *Supernatural* itself. The sudden relocation of familiar characters into new but instantly recognizable TV environments (even to the point of changing the opening credit sequence) produces absurd comedy. As Stacey Abbott notes, serial dramas regularly include what writers refer to as 'bubble episodes', departures from the usual format which are 'often sanctioned transgression designed to capitalize upon audience's taste for innovation' (2010a: 95). Yet 'Changing Channels' does not quite form an anomalous bubble, since it is tightly linked to the ongoing season arc. *Supernatural* is not a sitcom, a gameshow or a standard genre drama. It is both fantasy horror and a melodrama focused on male relationships, whether between brothers Sam and Dean and their father John, or between fraternal angels (the trickster is revealed to be the archangel Gabriel) and their father, God.

The notion of TV as a conduit to other worlds grows out of, and reverses, the mundanity of television, defamiliarizing TV as a communication medium that is not only able to link the natural with the supernatural but also to network this uncanny communication.

Networking ups the horror, shifting from a one-to-one confrontation, a personal threat, to something on a viral scale, an apocalyptic potential made possible by the very ubiquity of TV, which is not just in our homes (sometimes in every room), but in public places like bars or waiting areas. Below we examine in more detail how a range of drama, not just TV horror, represents TV as a conduit or network, focusing on *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes*, *Being Human*, *Angel*, *Doctor Who* and the infamous BBC mockumentary *Ghostwatch*.

Increasingly, TV has become an interactive medium and this makes it yet more uncanny. As Denzell Richards explains 'unlike older analogue formats which always possessed physical referents (celluloid film, video tape, etc.), new media is essentially "virtual", having been either "digitised" from its original form or captured digitally in the first instance, and exists only as computer code' (2010: 180). TV shows now routinely offer online expansion videos, podcast commentaries and documentary companion series such as *Doctor Who Confidential* or CBBC's *Totally Doctor Who*. While once such interactive viewing might have been associated with cult TV or genres that attract dedicated fans, such as science fiction and horror, Sharon Marie Ross suggests that tele-participation 'is becoming industrially normalised' (quoted in Hills 2010a: 219). Matt Hills even argues that new *Doctor Who* episodes use imagery of interactive media to code mainstream popularity (2010a: 217), as when the Doctor co-ordinates a media virus from a mobile phone in 'The Eleventh Hour' (5.1). *Dr Horrible's Sing Along Blog* (2008) and *Doctor Who*'s 'Blink' (3.10) both reflect on TV as an interactive medium. *Dr. Horrible,* created during the 2007-8 Writers Guild of America strike, presents itself as an online video blog and aired online in three instalments. 'Blink' (also discussed in Chapter 5) includes a DVD Easter egg of the Doctor that holds the key to resolving protagonist Sally Sparrow's deadly encounter with the weeping angels. Neither the Easter egg nor the blog are TV 'programmes' as such, yet both are immediately recognizable to the audience as televisual, demonstrating how far TV has moved from static programming towards convergence media. This notion of TV as convergent and interactive is explored through a closer examination of *Doctor Who*

two-part story ‘Silence in the Library’ and ‘Forest of the Dead’ (4.8 and 4.9).

Finally this chapter debates how TV horror uses the reality effect of popular television to provide a new twist on familiar horror tropes. The documentary aspect of video taps into contemporary anxieties about public surveillance and the prevalence of CCTV cameras (especially in the UK). However, the notion of documentary as an objective representation of the ‘facts’ has been consistently challenged, and reality TV demonstrates just how much of the reality effect is a careful construction. Reality TV has overtaken soap opera as the most denigrated form of TV. Annette Hill observes that reality TV is seen by viewers and critics alike as humiliation TV, provoking shame in its reception and its production (2007: 196). *The Twilight Zone*’s ‘Special Service’ (1989) tackled these issues early on with a *Truman Show*-style scenario written by *Babylon 5* creator J. M. Straczynski, while *Doctor Who*’s ‘Bad Wolf’ (1.12) parodies various reality TV and game shows (such as *Big Brother*, *What Not to Wear* and *The Weakest Link*), even including celebrity voices. James Chapman states that ‘what is most remarkable about it is that the producers and presenters of those shows were complicit in the process’ (2006: 197), though Hills suggests it was seen by Endemol as ‘playful appropriation of their intellectual property rather than outright critique’ (2010a: 169). Similar complicity and appropriation are also evident in one of our key examples, zombie mini-series *Dead Set*. Here the action takes place in and around the *Big Brother* house, mixing backstage insight and celebrity cameos with gory scenes of horror in a satire of consumption. If *Dead Set* operates as serious horror with satirical bite, both *Garth Marenghi’s Darkplace* and the recurring Ghostfacer characters in *Supernatural* can be described as comedy or parody. What they parody above all is televisual form itself, especially as constructed in recent years as TV converges with internet and DVD technology. Thus, these, even more than the other examples explored in this chapter, are aimed at an audience familiar with the conventions of TV horror.

TV AS CONDUIT AND NETWORK

In keeping with the tradition established in *Poltergeist*, the BBC programmes *Life on Mars, Ashes to Ashes* and *Being Human* present television as a haunting conduit to the afterlife. In all three shows, the television is one of the primary means through which the main characters communicate across the veil and, in the case of *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes*, it is precisely because television is an old technology that makes it so uncanny. Neither *Life on Mars* or *Ashes to Ashes* would necessarily be described as TV horror, but they present the past as a haunting location where the familiar is made unfamiliar and television is a key element of that uncanniness. In both series, a character wakes up to find themselves in the past (Sam Tyler in the 1970s and Alex Drake in the 1980s, respectively) and is uncertain as to whether they have been transported into the past or whether they are in a coma experiencing a dream. Sam and Alex are portrayed as out of their depth within a world that is alien and alienating, and television often serves as a sign of their disjointedness. Sam's anxiety about being trapped in alien 1970s Britain is expressed through his nightmarish visions of the girl from the BBC test card, who emerges from his television and appears in his room to confound him with riddles. Alex's guilt at having left her daughter Molly is similarly made manifest by haunting images of Molly who repeatedly communicates with her through the television, often appearing in reflections or glimpses out of the corner of Alex's eye. Furthermore, at the end of Season 2 and beginning of Season 3, when Alex has seemingly woken up from her coma and is back in the 'real' world, she is confronted by images of DCI Gene Hunt and his team – characters both she and Sam encountered in their past experience – on her television set, calling her back to their world. In one truly nightmarish image, Hunt's face appears on all of the television screens in a home entertainment store as well as the advertising screens in Piccadilly Circus, each image beckoning Alex to return. The revelation that these past locations are neither really in the past nor the product of a dream state, but are rather a form of purgatory for dead (or near dead) police officers to work through their

issues, reinforces the link between television and the afterlife. In both of these series television represents the uncanny world and takes over from the nineteenth-century medium as the channel through which the dead can communicate with the living.

In contrast, *Being Human* is set in contemporary Bristol, and later Barry in Wales, and therefore does not use television to convey a sense of the uncanny but rather the mundane. *Being Human* is a form of kitchen sink gothic (see Chapter 6) in which the unfamiliar is made familiar – a ghost, a vampire and a werewolf all move into a flat share while they work through their identity issues – it could be *This Life*. The use of the TV as a means through which the ghost Annie first communicates with the 'other side', as mysterious forces try to lure her in, and later speaks to vampire Mitchell and werewolf George when she has crossed over into purgatory, therefore grounds the supernatural within the everyday. What all three programmes have in common is that they feature a liminal world between life and death, the natural and the supernatural, and as such they draw upon the perception of television as a threshold to other worlds to convey that liminality.

The episodes 'Smile Time' from *Angel* and 'The Idiot's Lantern' from *Doctor Who* similarly present television as a threshold and in these cases it is not simply a channel for communication but also a means of influence. Here the television is deliberately menacing rather than uncanny. During 'Smile Time', in an echo of the image from *Poltergeist*, a young child is urged by a beloved, and seemingly harmless, puppet television character to touch the TV screen, whereupon the child's life force is absorbed by the puppet/ demon, leaving the child in a comatose state (see Fig. 9.1). Similarly, in 'The Idiot's Lantern', an alien, again appearing in the seemingly benign form of a television personality, feeds off the life force of individuals watching their newly-acquired televisions, robbing them of their faces and their souls in the process. Both episodes play with the familiar critique of television as mind numbing entertainment: the children are left with blank, staring smiles in *Angel*, while the victims in *Doctor Who* are transformed into faceless zombies. In the *Doctor Who* episode, a grandmother even warns her grandson about television: 'I

hear they rot your brains … rot them into soup and your brain comes pouring out of your ears … that's what television does'. Both episodes also tap into what Sconce argues is the continued perception that television 'remains … a somewhat unsettling and alien [or, in the case of *Angel*, demonic] technology' able to exert an 'ambiguous and unknown control' over the family (2000: 165). In 'The Idiot's Lantern', the alien's repeated declarations of 'Hungry' before attacking her victims has echoes of Matheson's 'Through Channels' in which the television demands to be 'F-E-D'. Both shows convey the anxiety that 'the viewer is vulnerable to such assimilation simply by watching TV' (Sconce 2000: 165). In the BBC serial *Quatermass and the Pit*, a televised news broadcast about a recently-discovered missile is disrupted when the missile, actually of Martian origin, absorbs the electrical energy for the broadcast and begins to project its violent influence across London telepathically, causing mayhem throughout the city. Here the energy boost supplied by television to the alien missile is accidental. By the twenty-first century, 'Smile Time' and 'The Idiot's Lantern' have the technology used consciously and in so doing they are not simply replaying familiar anxieties dating back to the fifties but updating them. In both cases the attacks begin with the alien/demons absorbing one life at a time, but are then upscaled by the demons and alien who plan to network their audience and draw out their life force simultaneously. In this case, the true threat is not the television in the living room, but rather the invisible network that binds all televisions together on a national and global level – a theme that is more relevant today than ever before. With respect to 'The Idiot's Lantern', the updating of themes expressed in the *Quatermass* serials is not coincidental. Writer Mark Gatiss comments that he wanted the episode to consciously tie in with the history of broadcasting in the 1950s and as a result concludes the action at Alexandra Palace, where the first *Quatermass* serial, *The Quatermass Experiment* was filmed. The fact that 'The Idiot's Lantern' is set during the broadcast of Queen Elizabeth II's coronation situates Gatiss' story of alien invasion just a few weeks before the broadcast of the first of the *Quatermass* episodes.

9.1 ‘Smile Time’ *Angel* (5.14)

The *Doctor Who* episode ‘Day of the Moon’ (6.2) reverses the alien threat posited in ‘The Idiot’s Lantern’ by having the Doctor use the broadcast network to release humanity from alien occupation. He does this by embedding within the footage of Neil Armstrong’s first step on the Moon – a moment watched by millions of people around the world and repeatedly rebroadcast since – a subliminal image of the alien order, The Silence, urging humanity to destroy The Silence on sight. Given that these aliens manipulate humanity by silently and subliminally influencing their actions, this image seals their doom. Here the power of this invisible television network is re-appropriated by the Doctor.

The broadcast network is at the heart of the 1992 mockumentary *Ghostwatch*, a fictionalized drama based around a ‘live’ TV investigation of ‘Britain’s most haunted house’. While the *Radio Time*s promoted this film as a drama, and a voice-over at the beginning of the broadcast reinforced this, its style, modelled on the BBC series *Crimewatch*, presented the film as a real televised event, complete with remote coverage from inside the house and outside on the street, studio interviews with scientific experts, and a ‘live’ call-in centre encouraging audience interaction. The cast included recognizable television presenters of the era such as Michael Parkinson, Sarah Greene, Mike Smith and Craig Charles, all of which served to reaffirm the authenticity of this ‘live’ event.

This supposed 'liveness' grounds the programme's engagement with horror in its inherent televisuality. It is frightening because it is supposed to be chronicling a series of supernatural events happening live in front of the camera. As the show continues, however, it is not only the events happening on camera that are frightening, but the series of calls coming in that recount supernatural occurrences supposedly happening simultaneously with the broadcast. Initially dismissed by studio host Michael Parkinson, it becomes apparent that the live broadcast of the investigation has released the ghost from the house onto the airwaves across the country, creating a form of broadcast séance. This leads to national hysteria and chaos in the studio as the equipment breaks down and Parkinson is left alone, either possessed by spirits or helpless in fear. Here the live television broadcast is itself the threshold through which the ghost escapes the boundaries of the house and into the unbounded television airwaves, reinforcing not only the liminality of the television, but of the invisible airwaves that form the broadcast network. This potential for a live-broadcast séance has been adopted by the paranormal-investigating reality TV series *Most Haunted*, during their regular live events. Developed in 2002, ten years after *Ghostwatch*, the series is closely modelled on the BBC drama and, in a manner of life imitating art, the show regularly includes live events where audience members are invited to telephone, email or text in with any evidence of ghostly activity during the broadcast.

The fictional broadcast hysteria of *Ghostwatch* was followed by a real broadcast hysteria, as the BBC was flooded with calls asking if the film was real and complaining that it was too scary (Rigby 1996: 28; Anon 1992). This reinforces the fact that the horror generated by the programme was a result of its televisuality. What made this film so effective and threatening was the suggestion that this was 'actually happening' … now … and not simply captured *on* TV but channelled *through* television. While the mockumentary format has been popularized within contemporary horror cinema through such films as *The Blair Witch Project, Cloverfield, Diary of the Dead, [Rec], Paranormal Activity* and *The Last Exorcism,* none of them has generated the hysteria of *Ghostwatch*. No matter how effectively they

conform to the conventions of the documentary and to realism, we never quite believe that they are real.

Furthermore, the presence of the supernatural on film means that it is bound by the form of that medium – the monsters, ghosts or witches are trapped on film and so the audience can watch safely within the cinema. *Ghostwatch*, however, reinforced the notion that television is not contained by physical boundaries and, as such events on screen were not trapped on the television but able to extend outward to include the audience: therein lies the horror. Within contemporary TV horror the television serves as a conduit, both to other worlds and to other televisions, through which the supernatural can circulate invisibly. It can also, in our world of convergence media, serve as a portal to other technologies.

TV AS INTERFACE

In his discussion of haunted media, Sconce argues that anthology TV series of the 1950s and 1960s often used the 'technological prehistory of TV' to evoke 'the uncanny aspects of their medium simply by turning to the past and dramatizing the cultural memory of previous haunted technologies' (2000: 134). For instance, *The Twilight Zone* episode 'Night Call' is about a haunted telephone able to communicate with the dead, while 'The Sixteen Millimetre Shrine' explores the uncanny properties of cinema, able to make people immortal by freezing them in time. We argue that the uses of television in the two-part *Doctor Who* episodes, 'Silence in the Library' and 'Forest of the Dead' use the now well-established and familiar technology of television to reflect upon the transformation of TV into new digital media. As in *Poltergeist*, we return to the image of a child in front of the television, but in this case the image reflects a complex array of convergence technology. Here the television is not a threshold between worlds, but an interface between different media platforms. The little girl Cal speaks to the Doctor through her television while the Doctor speaks to her through a computer. She watches 'real' events in the library but also virtual events happening

in a simulated world, into which the computer has downloaded the human characters from the library. The lines between 'real' and 'virtual' worlds presented in the episodes become increasingly blurred when it is revealed that Cal is a living soul downloaded into the library's hard drive (CAL stands for Charlotte Abigail Lux), and the world we see her in is a computer-simulated dream world. Her viewing is therefore not passive observation but interactive as she controls each of these worlds by pressing buttons on the remote, making books fly around the library, or making the people in her own simulated world disappear, and even setting the library on self-destruct. This is an extreme version of the interactivity that is currently available through digital media, which is predicated upon its 'programmability, automation, and variability', allowing viewers to adjust their viewing to suit their preferences (Richards 2010: 180). Cal's choices with her remote have a direct impact upon the characters in the library, in much the same way that viewers of the *Doctor Who* expansion video *Attack of the Graske* (BBCi, 2005) could 'make either/or selections at appropriate moments to determine the course of the narrative' (Richards 2010: 183). 'Silence in the Library' and 'Forest of the Dead', therefore, capture the uncanniness of new media technologies, in which the lines between the 'real' and the simulated world have been blurred.

Furthermore, while Cal's flicking between channels initially seems benign, the imagery becomes increasingly horrific as the boundaries between real and unreal unravel. As Dr Moon tells Cal, 'there's the real world and there's the world of nightmares … the real world is a lie and your nightmares are real'. The stuff of Cal's nightmares, which she watches on her TV, is the world of the Doctor and his companions, and in these sequences the show capitalizes upon its own technological uncanniness as a source of horror in a way that is unique to telefantasy. On her television, Cal watches the Doctor in the 'real world' dangle precariously above the vast library city as he tries to escape the monstrous alien Vashta Nerada. The only thing real in the image is actor David Tennant playing the Doctor and the pipe from which he hangs. The rest of the image is created for the viewer at home entirely through computer-generated special effects, a fact

both recognized and accepted by viewers as part of the suspension of disbelief required for watching telefantasy. The uncanniness of these televisual special effects is highlighted later in the episode when the Doctor's companion, Donna, is told that the world she believes is real is a virtual reality created by a computer, evidenced by the fact that the numerous children she watches running around a playground are just two kids, digitally duplicated to populate the world. Here this technique, commonly used in film and television (as in the street party scene of 'The Idiot's Lantern') to reduce the cost of extras when constructing crowd scenes, becomes sinister and uncanny. The potential horror of the digital manipulation intrinsic to new technologies is driven home by the image of Miss Evangelista, another human downloaded into this virtual reality. She has been mistakenly reconfigured, and as a result her face is monstrously distorted – causing the young Cal to scream and turn away when her face is revealed (see Fig. 9.2). Each of these moments in 'Forest of the Dead' becomes a source of horror, and as a result *Doctor Who* forces the audience to confront the uncanniness of the digital technology now such a staple of contemporary television.

9.2 ‘Forest of the Dead’ *Doctor Who* (4.9)

TV’S REALITY EFFECTS

While pseudo-documentary *Ghostwatch* achieved its horror effect by capitalizing on the inherent immediacy and ‘liveness’ of TV broadcast and the apparent authenticity of its events, the introduction to this book notes that fans of the genre often have fond memories of watching horror on TV. Ernest Mathijs and Xavier Mendik argue that ‘a core feature of many cult films is their ability to trigger a sense of nostalgia, a yearning for an idealized past’ (2008: 3) and this applies equally to horror on and for TV. *Dr Terrible’s House of Horrible* affectionately pastiches the portmanteau horror film (such as *Dr Terror’s House of Horrors*), complete with narrator and guest stars, and *Garth Marenghi’s Dark-place* takes the notion of nostalgic horror further, producing a parody aimed specifically at TV fans.

Presented on the DVD cover as a ‘lost masterpiece of televisual terror’, *Garth Marenghi’s Darkplace* features episodes that are

embellished by integral feature interviews with the show's creator and star Garth Marenghi, with other 'actors', and with the show's 'producer', and the DVD comes as an entirely 'straight' rendition of a real television programme, with very little indication that it is a parody. Like *The League of Gentlemen*, discussed in Chapters 1 and 7, *Garth Marenghi* began as an award-winning stage show and eventually moved to television. From the start, *Garth Marenghi's* creator refused to be interviewed out of character, preserving the illusion that the character is real and that the TV show 'he' wrote, directed and executively produced was actually made (if unaired) in the 1980s. A BBC news article describes the stage show as 'a parody of paperback horror novels and their writers' ('Garth Marenghi Uncovered' 2001) and *Garth Marenghi* similarly parodies 'bad' TV horror, complete with dated 1980s fashions, wooden acting, ridiculous plots and low-budget special effects. Yet it also celebrates the way fans might remember its cosmic broccoli (episode 6) or 'lethal' scotch mist (episode 5) with nostalgic affection, were they real TV horror productions. Cult film fandom, Mark Jancovich suggests, 'celebrates the unwatchable and/or unobtainable – that which is by definition usually unpleasurable or inaccessible to most viewers' (2008: 151). *Darkplace*'s 'realistic' exposure of commercialist exploitation of fan nostalgia, especially the banality of the extra features, presents itself as exactly this type of unpleasurable object ('so bad, it's good'), but in televisual terms. The show has also supposedly been unobtainable ('None of the episodes have ever been seen until now', promises the DVD insert, 'although the show enjoyed a brief run in Peru'), gently lampooning the fan's 'need to produce and protect a sense of rarity and exclusivity' (Jancovich 2008: 151).

Like *Dr Terrible's House of Horrible*, the 2010 *Psychoville* Halloween special adopts the portmanteau format, but incorporates reality TV as a means to cohere its various segments, with character Phil Walker from Goldfish Bowl Productions hunting out locations for a *Most Haunted*-type TV show. E4's *Dead Set* takes this further, and adopts the double bluff of adding realism by exposing the reality effect. 'Most viewers expect reality TV to be artificial', argues Hill, 'and in a perverse way the explicitly constructed nature of reality

gameshows is a form of truthfulness' (2007: 140). *Ghostwatch* was diegetically presented as 'real', even if it was advertised as drama; *Dead Set* deliberately exposes the 'artificiality' and 'explicitly constructed nature' of popular reality show *Big Brother* to make its graphic zombie-apocalypse horror seem more real by comparison. Thus, the mini-series includes recognizable aspects of *Big Brother*, like celebrity appearances (which were used in advertising) and backstage views, as well as providing 'real' horror through its flesh-eating zombies. Creator Charlie Brooker talks about filming real *Big Brother* ex-contestants on *Dead Set* 'almost documentary style', confessing that this slice of life was interrupted by 'nasty stuff to surprise them,' trading on 'real' reactions and on horror as violent interruption.

Dead Set does not, like some of our other examples, present TV as supernatural. On the contrary, it uses TV as a symbol of normal life, now swept away by the zombie apocalypse (in the way cinematic correlate *28 Days Later* uses deserted cityscapes). The snowy interference of the closing screen in *Masters of Horror*'s 'The Screwfly Solution' (see Chapter 4) tells us that the human world has effectively ended. Here, TV news with a recognizable newscaster (Channel 4's Krishnan Guru-Murthy) first signifies normality, however fraught (as in *Shaun of the Dead*, or episodes of *Doctor Who* and *Torchwood* that deal with national or international crises), but as the story continues dead TV screens signify the end of life as we know it. For a time, the live feed from the *Big Brother* house continues (episode 3), a plot device that encourages protagonist Kelly's boyfriend Riq to fight his way to her (she works on the show as a runner for the production crew) but the live feed also documents the zombie takeover right up to the eventual infection, or death, eventually, of all the characters. *Dead Set*'s closing image shows a grimly dystopian zombie future, as Kelly's bloody and vacant face fills the live feed screens with no one to watch (episode 5).

Slightly paradoxically, *Big Brother* in *Dead Set* comes to represent the artificial nature of the characters' old lives, something they might be advised to forget now they face pressing issues of basic survival (a theme AMC's *The Walking Dead* also takes up, though without the

TV allusion). Housemate Marky's appearance on the front cover of *Heat* magazine (episode 3) is insignificant beside the threat of being eaten alive by zombies, but neither the characters nor the viewers can quite let go of old priorities. 'You just killed Davina', whines evicted housemate Pippa to producer Patrick (Davina McCall was the main UK *Big Brother* presenter), as though zombie-Davina were any different to the other flesh-eaters. 'I hired her', he retorts, 'I can do what I like'. *Big Brother* may now simply be a 'dead set' (the programme is taken off-air halfway through the first episode, though a separate live feed from the set continues) but the audience of *Dead Set* watches the interactions of characters and the fragmentation of the group (always a staple of post-apocalyptic drama, as seen in many adaptations of *The Day of the Triffids*, as well as *The Walking Dead*), almost as if it were Endemol's reality TV show. Thus, viewers are sucked into endorsing Patrick's pragmatism at times, despite his objectionable attitude; guess that voyeuristic and posturing housemate Joplin is likely to betray the group (he sides with Patrick in episode 5); or make judgements about Kelly's relationships with long-term boyfriend Riq and housemate Space.

The constructed nature of *Big Brother* is exposed from the start, with scenes showing how filming takes place in dark, narrow camera runs behind the walls of the *Big Brother* House. These shift from being a behind-the-scenes exposé to functioning as the claustrophobic site of horror: a classic confined space in which victims can be hunted down. 'I realised that the camera run was a really creepy place', says Brooker, 'so you start to think how scary it would be if there was something in the camera run … So it could see you, but you couldn't see it.' Initially, the house seems to be a safe place for the survivors, but horror is soon, literally, coming out of the walls, and the *Big Brother* House becomes the site of humanity's last stand, an irony few are likely to miss.

Hill notes that a 'focus on emotions has become a trademark for many factual programmes, where the premise is to observe or put people in emotionally difficult situations' (2007: 15). She goes on to discuss how reality TV in particular chooses to 'focus on negative emotions' so that 'feelings of humiliation, anger, superiority, jealousy

become part of our expectations for the genre' (15).[39] While horror fans may not watch (or not admit to watching) reality TV shows like *Big Brother*, *Dead Set* taps into the same emotions, neatly weaving them into the survivors-under-pressure scenario familiar from post-apocalyptic horror. Its graphic gore might seem to preclude a mainstream audience, yet *Dead Set* was E4's second most popular show of the year (see Rogers 2008). Reality gameshows, lifestyle and life experiment shows attract younger audiences than other non-fiction television like news or current affairs (Hill 2007: 65), the same demographic that might be expected to watch a horror mini-series on E4. Like horror, reality TV threatens 'ideals of … quality culture and perceived moral standards', with responses to it often exposing the ways such judgments are 'framed by an elitist view of culture' (Hill 2007: 61). The recent reality boom and resulting vilification has opened up debates about quality and, as Hill notes, about how TV can 'push social and cultural boundaries', outraging some viewers' sense of fairness, taste and decency (107). The pathologization of reality TV audiences, then, is not too far away from the way horror audiences have historically been described. *Dead Set*'s juxtaposition of the two demonstrates that they are not incompatible.

There is a history of reality TV or mockumentary bubble episodes in genre TV – see *The X-Files*' 'X-Cops' (7.12), or *Buffy*'s 'Storyteller' (7.16) – and Abbott suggests that cult shows 'push formal and narrative boundaries' (2010a: 93) through episodes like these. *Supernatural*'s intertextual use of horror tropes and urban legends has been mentioned in previous chapters. The show also references TV's connections with other media, and with the fans who consume it, through the recurring Ghostfacer characters, self-styled ghost hunters, as well as introducing (in Season 4) a series of popular *Supernatural* books written by 'prophet' Chuck, that accrues its own avid fan following.

Both 'Hellhouse' (1.17) and 'Ghostfacers' (3.13) set up a contrast between *Supernatural*'s protagonists, the Winchester brothers, and the Ghostfacers. The Ghostfacers introduce themselves as professionals ('Hellhouse'), yet Dean and Sam Winchester *are*

professionals, or the closest thing to it, with years of practical experience that the Ghostfacers lack. Throughout, 'Hellhouse' makes use of the tension between authenticity and the fabrication of authenticity associated with reality formats. Though London E. Brickley argues that 'Sam's laptop is his main research tool' and 'internet sources have been continually reaffirmed within the show's diegesis to be worthy source material' (quoted in Felschow 2010: 6.4), in 'Hellhouse' internet sources are implicitly unreliable, as Dean's response indicates when Sam admits he found information 'surf[ing] some local paranormal websites'. This shift is necessary because 'Hellhouse' revolves around unreliable narratives. A montage of *vox pop* interviews gives conflicting stories about the haunted house the brothers are investigating. Eventually they discover that a young man, Craig, invented the haunted house story, and now the 'ghost' (actually a tulpa that thrives on belief), gains strength and changes according to the latest story published on the Hell Hound's Lair website (run by Ghostfacers Ed and Harry). 'Everything just took on a life of its own', Craig confesses. 'I mean, I thought it was funny at first, but … now that girl's dead. It was just a joke, you know, I mean – none of it was real, we made the whole thing up, I swear.' Here, although the Winchesters clearly think him irresponsible and he is guilty of fabricating a *Most Haunted*-type scenario, Craig's response is authenticated by remorseful tears, real emotion.

The distinction between the Winchesters and the Ghostfacers is really about different priorities: Sam and Dean see themselves as 'saving people' by 'hunting things'; the Ghostfacers aim to document the experience and 'get a book and movie deal' ('Hellhouse'), cashing in on the fabrication that Craig now regrets. The prank war waged by the Winchester brothers on each other in this episode suggests that while they can be infantile on the level of personal interaction, they are professional when working a case. In contrast, the Ghostfacers crew are consistently presented as inexperienced and even incompetent in this and subsequent episodes.

This opposition is reversed in 'It's a Terrible Life' (4.17) when both Winchesters are (by angelic intervention) living alternate lives. Neither are aware of who they 'really' are, nor do they remember their

past lives; instead they each seem to have lived a whole new life from the outset. When they suddenly stumble across a haunting, they seek advice from the internet on how to tackle a ghost. Dean tells Sam, 'I just found the best site ever. Real, actual ghost hunters. These guys are genius' – he is on the Ghostfacers site. However, since the valuable guidance given in the Ghostfacers' instructional video was originally learned from 'those useless douche bags/ that we hate/ the Winchesters' this reversal does not last long for the viewer. The episode has angel Zachariah tell Dean that hunting is 'in your blood. It's what you are' and the story demonstrates that Dean and Sam are 'naturals' even without years of experience and training.[40]

Since 'Ghostfacers' parodies the type of 'real-life' documentary-style reality TV seen in *Most Haunted* (rather than a show like *Big Brother*), it adopts this form, with the intrepid Ghostfacers using hand-held cameras to record their investigation of the haunted house as it happens. Since this is supposed to be a pilot for a reality TV show, both brothers' swearing is bleeped out in 'Ghostfacers', incidentally drawing attention to the fact that the characters do not use language beyond network TV acceptability in regular episodes. Similarly, when Dean's image in the title credit sequence raises his middle finger, it is blurred out. Both censorings suggest that Dean and Sam are more 'real' (less constructed for the camera) than the Ghostfacers, and such behaviour also fits with their established characters and blue collar background. Moreover Dean, the Winchester most au fait with pop culture, is wise to the appeal for viewers. When Ghostfacer Kenny Spruce asks him, off an overheard remark, a personal question, Dean retorts, 'No, no, no, I'm not going to whine about my *** problems for some reality TV show. I'm gonna do my *** job'. This stands in direct contrast to the way *Supernatural* typically draws on conventions of melodrama to present emotion between Dean and Sam, and to the ending of this episode where the Ghostfacers mourn the death of intern Alan Corbett before dedicating their episode to him (although this is punctured when Sam comments, 'It's bizarre how you all are able to, um, to honour Corbett's memory while grossly exploiting the manner of his death'). Here the emotional arena is

figured as comedy when the Ghostfacers are on display; the truthfulness of emotion itself always in question because of the nature of reality TV.

'The playfulness that is so much a part of reality TV can be a creative environment for viewers,' Hill suggests (2007: 111) and, in this case, that playfulness is extended to the two websites set up following 'Hellhouse' and 'Ghostfacers' (www.hellhoundslair.com and www.ghostfacers.com)[41]. These function as publicity for the show and as extended narrative for fans, and develop the lampooning of 'the conventions of reality TV and its ghost-hunting sub-genre' (Abbott 2010a: 96). The 'unsolicited pilot', as the 'Ghostfacers' episode presents itself, displays consciously 'bad' TV elements (fake slow motion, clumsy editing, lighting 'effects'), characteristic also of the 'Ghostfacers! Confessionals' DVD extra and the 'How To' video Dean and Sam watch in 'It's a Terrible Life'. Taking the documentary-style yet further, the Ghostfacers website even draws attention to accusations of constructedness in attempts to document the supernatural, assuring the viewer: 'No special effects, elaborate sound mixing or camera tricks of any kind were used on the film you are about to watch. It is pure, uncut reality so terrifying it makes Cthulhu look like a limp garden hose.' The Ghostfacers characters' referencing of fandom and fan knowledge (here, of writer H. P. Lovecraft's elaborate Cthulhu mythos), however, was divisive among viewers. Felschow argues that such episodes reinforce

> the power of the writers and reminds cult fans that they may only receive what is offered…. The acknowledgment of fan behavior … is not an overt invitation to participate, but a demonstration that the producers/writers of the program are aware of exactly what their fandom is doing *without* an invitation (2010: 6.6).

Whether this is an insult to fans, an in-joke or just TV horror intertexuality, it is a prime example of the expanded arena for fandom since the rise of the internet, and of the more 'interactive' relationship between producers and consumers expected of contemporary TV shows. As Jennifer Gillan points out, 'every TV show now has online,

if not on-mobile extensions, which allow regular viewers beyond a dedicated fandom to spend more time following a broadcast TV series into another platform and interacting with it there' (2011: 240), following 'an adjustment in network's attitudes toward fans and the new media through which much of their interaction takes place' (3). The interactions of fans and viewers with TV horror is the focus of the next chapter.

10. The Monster in Our Living Room

From Barnabas Collins to Dexter Morgan

Monsters have always held a special place within the horror genre, as well as a privileged position with fans. Horror is in many ways character based, spawning a long history of charismatic and engaging monsters: from the Phantom in *Phantom of the Opera* to Norman Bates in *Psycho* to Freddie Krueger in *Nightmare on Elm Street* to Jigsaw in *Saw.* Furthermore, these monsters have often generated sympathy from their audiences. While the monster in James Whale's *Frankenstein* is grotesque because he is hulking, misshapen and constructed from the body parts of the dead, Karloff played him as a victim of his own creation, more childlike then monstrous. Jigsaw is diabolical in the conception and execution of horrific games designed to test his victims' will to live, but Tobin Bell performs the character as articulate, civilized and convincing when arguing for the perverse morality that underpins his tests. Even iconic, and less well rounded, big screen monsters like Michael Myers (*Halloween*), Jason (*Friday the 13th* franchise) and Freddy (*Nightmare on Elm Street*) have developed huge fandoms that include fan clubs, online forums, and MySpace and Facebook pages (with both actors and characters possessing hundreds, if not thousands, of Facebook friends). When the film *Freddy vs Jason* was

released in the cinema, fans were invited to choose sides by voting online for who should win. Guests at horror film festivals and conventions often include actors who have played these monsters, with regular appearances by Ingrid Pitt (Carmilla in *The Vampire Lovers*), Robert Englund (Freddy), Gunnar Hansen (Leatherface in *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*), and Tony Todd (*Candyman*). Horror fans are drawn to the monsters that are fundamentally at the centre of the horror narrative.

Robin Wood argues, however, that while horror monsters have often been charismatic or sympathetic, the underlying formula for the genre remains that 'normality is threatened by the Monster' and it is the relationship between normality and the monster that varies (1986: 79). While in classic horror the monster must be destroyed in order to preserve normality, represented according to Wood by the heterosexual couple and/or the family, contemporary horror is often more ambivalent towards both. The monster is frequently not destroyed and 'normality' continues to be under threat and, he argues, that is part of the pleasure.

But where does this leave us with regard to television horror? As demonstrated in Chapter 4, the seriality of TV lends itself to moral complexity and the dystopian vision associated with paranoid rather than classic horror. It also lends itself to a perceived sense of intimacy between audiences and TV characters as we watch their lives unfold on a daily or weekly basis. The impact of this on horror is the dominance of the sympathetic 'monster' as a television icon, with a lineage traceable back to Barnabas Collins in *Dark Shadows*. If the contemporary horror film is built around an ambivalent relationship between the monster and normality, then the presence of horror on television in some ways normalizes the monstrous, blurring the lines between normality and the monster, and in so doing, implicating the audience. The popularity of the vampire genre on television since *Dark Shadows* has meant that the sympathetic or reluctant vampire, while not exclusive to TV, is a recurring trope in series such as *Forever Knight, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Angel, Moonlight, Blood Ties, Being Human, True Blood* and *The Vampire Diaries*, each with their own loyal and engaged fandom. Focusing upon the reluctant

vampire could yield a coherent, if somewhat predictable, analysis of the relationship between fandom and the TV monster, but instead we have selected three case studies – *Dark Shadows, Torchwood* and *Dexter* – to demonstrate that fans' engagement with the sympathetic TV monster extends well beyond the vampire. The diversity of these programmes raises distinct questions about TV monsters and their fans.

While Dan Curtis, as discussed in Chapter 3, originally created the vampire Barnabas Collins in order to eventually kill him off, the phenomenal fan response to this character saved him (Thompson 2009: 57-58). Fans saw Collins as a tragic figure, a reluctant vampire struggling against his affliction. Although this was not the original plan of the series' creators, or Jonathan Frid who played Barnabas, once the fan letters began to pour in, they were happy to recreate the character to satisfy the audience's response. *Torchwood*, however, comes at the situation from a different angle by establishing Captain Jack Harkness as a hero in appearance and action before gradually undermining this representation by portraying him as a monster. As the series progresses, Jack is increasingly presented as abject through his repeated death sequences, and capable of inhuman actions, all, supposedly, for the 'greater good'. However, in the contemporaneous series *Dexter*, we have a character who has, from episode 1, been deliberately written as morally ambiguous. His voice-over displays Dexter's introspection and emotional engagement (or disengagement) with those around him and his desire to evolve, but it also conveys, along with the murder sequences themselves, Dexter's complete acceptance of his identity as a serial killer and the pleasure he takes in murder. The series tasks its fans to identify with, and even like, a self-admitted and, largely, unapologetic serial killer. This chapter examines the attraction of TV series with 'monsters' as the main protagonists and explores how the genre capitalizes upon, but also problematizes, the notion of the 'sympathetic' monster.

This engagement goes beyond fans simply watching the TV show itself, encompassing a growing network of ancillary texts, products and outlets for fan expression. Recent discourses have increasingly addressed the fact that, despite arguments about TV being defined

by the flow of broadcasting engaging the casual glance of its viewer (Williams 1974; Ellis 1982), television has never been restricted to one medium, but instead offers fans multiple avenues to engage with their favourite programmes or TV monsters, what Will Brooker describes as 'overflow':

> While fans must return to this week's episode for reference, the show is apparently intended to serve as the starting point for further activity rather than as an isolated, self-contained cultural artefact. Instead of waiting for the next instalment, the fan is invited to extend the show's pleasures, to allow the show into her everyday life beyond the scheduling framework (2001: 461).

Little has been written about TV horror in relation to broadcast overflow, despite the fact that one of the earliest TV fan followings developed around *Dark Shadows* and its leading monster heroes: vampire Barnabas and werewolf Quentin Collins. Unlike most daytime soap operas that disappear into the ether, *Dark Shadows* was sold into syndication, released on video and then DVD, remade as a prime-time series in the 1990s and adapted to the big screen three times. The fandom around this series led to conventions, novels, comic strips, episode guides and a series of audio dramas for which the remaining cast reunited. These activities serve as precursors to the online form of 'overflow' that Brooker describes in his discussion of *Dawson's Creek*. Since *Dark Shadows,* numerous horror TV series have continued this tradition, building audience loyalty not only through the programmes but by extending the narrative, and, therefore, the adventures of favourite TV monsters, beyond the television screen and onto other media platforms through transmedia storytelling; what Henry Jenkins describes as 'the art of world making'.

> To fully experience any fiction world, consumers must assume the role of hunters and gatherers, chasing down bits of the story across media channels, comparing notes with each other via online discussion groups, and collaborating to ensure that everyone who invests time and effort will come away with a richer entertainment experience (Jenkins 2006: 21).

This chapter therefore also considers the impact of this extension of TV seriality upon how fans engage and identify with the TV monster across media.

DARK SHADOWS: THE SYMPATHETIC MONSTER

Dark Shadows is a landmark for TV horror as so much of what followed in terms of character, narrative and thematic tropes, as well as fan involvement, saw its origins in this 1960s gothic soap opera. As discussed in Chapter 3, the series used its inherent seriality to develop lengthy narratives surrounding a gallery of monsters, enabling them to develop beyond their monstrous conditions into morally complex and attractive characters with which audiences could identify. Barnabas Collins represents one of the earliest in a long line of sympathetic TV monsters who walk a fine line between good and evil, and whose popularity implicates the audience in his moral ambiguity. As we have previously discussed, Barnabas' sympathetic nature was not the original plan but rather emerged from fan response to the character. Consequently, the writers began to write Barnabas as sympathetic, providing him with romantic sub-plots and a back story explaining that his vampirism was a result of his victimisation at the hands of a witch. As Frid explains, the fans 'see Barnabas as a romantic figure because I play him as a lonely, tormented man rather than a Bela Lugosi villain. I bite girls in the neck, but only when my uncontrollable need for blood drives me to it. And I always feel remorseful later' (quoted in Fox 1968: 40). Ratings for the series doubled within months of introducing Barnabas into the plot and provided Jonathan Frid with a massive fan following: at the series' peak he was receiving up to 5,000 fan letters a week (Fox 1968: 40).

The success of this approach to Barnabas' character led to a pattern of character development for the community of ghouls, witches, werewolves and ghosts that haunted Collinsport. Even weak or villainous characters like Willie Loomis, the con man and thief who inadvertently released Barnabas from his coffin when he was hunting

for the Collins' family fortune, and Angelique, the witch who cursed Barnabas with vampirism when he spurned her affections, were presented as complex beings. Willie was increasingly written as a sympathetic victim of Barnabas, under the vampire's power and burdened with complicity in all of the vampire's violent actions. While the series did not go so far as to present Angelique as sympathetic, her continued obsession with Barnabas humanized her villainy and occasionally permitted her to assist the Collins family, even if for her own, often unrevealed, purposes. The Barnabas formula was, however, most fully exploited in Quentin Collins. First introduced as a malevolent spirit in a narrative strand inspired by Henry James' *Turn of the Screw*, a time travel narrative to 1897, broadcast from March to November 1969, slowly revealed that, like Barnabas, Quentin possessed a complex backstory of violence, gypsy curses and betrayal that resulted in his becoming a werewolf. While Barnabas embodied romantic longing, as well as restraint and suffering, Quentin represented an aggressive hyper-masculinity tinged with a hint of melancholy, in keeping with gothic anti-heroes like Heathcliff and Mr Rochester. His eventual immortality, granted through the introduction of a Dorian Gray-style portrait that both aged for him and transformed into a wolf at the full moon, released Quentin from the curse and lent the character a world-weary romanticism that overrode his darker characteristics or actions.[42] With the 1897 narrative, the show reached the height of its popularity, attracting up to 20 million viewers, and Quentin quickly rose to become the second star of the series, almost as popular with audiences as Barnabas (Clark, Resch and Robin 1990: 146).

This representation of the monster as sympathetic outsider struggling with their place in this community and fighting their inner demons not only prefigures the increasingly humanized monsters of contemporary series like *The Vampire Diaries* and *Being Human*, but also signals aspects that appealed to the series' many fans. Harry M. Benshoff explains that while researching *Dark Shadows* fandom, '[m]any *DS* fans told me that while growing up they felt like outsiders and that *DS* afforded them a place of comfort and/or a fantasy of

power' (1993: 53). This conforms to Margaret L. Carter's argument that in the 1970s there was a broader cultural shift in the representation of the vampire, with 'the vampire often appear[ing] as an attractive figure precisely *because* he or she is a vampire' in contrast to Victorian fiction in which the vampire is presented as inherently evil despite their magnetic appeal. 'This shift in fictional characterisation', she argues, 'reflects a change in cultural attitudes toward the outsider, the alien other' (1997: 27). Rather then fear the outsider, readers (and audiences), in an era that saw the rise of civil and gay rights alongside the feminist movement, increasingly identify with and/or romanticize the outsider who represents an independent spirit and a refusal to conform. These changing attitudes contribute to what Veronica Hollinger describes as the process of 'decentering' in which 'voices historically relegated to the margins of discourse, of representation, of authority have come to the foreground, and perspectives rarely privileged have begun to be considered as – at least potentially – valid' (1997: 200). In the case of fantasy fiction, this results in the monster, now presented sympathetically, standing in for these marginalized groups. *Dark Shadows*, airing between 1966 and 1971, prefigured this movement within the literary and cinematic vampire genre and expanded it beyond the vampire to include a broad range of monsters.

The particular appeal of these wayward monsters to fans of the series was noted by critic Terry Helbing when he attended a *Dark Shadows* festival in 1989: 'no doubt many of these fans take particular solace from principal ghoul Barnabas Collins, a vampire who agonized over his condition but nevertheless tried to live and love with some dignity'(1989: 25). While Melody Clark, Kathleen Resch and Marcy Robin state that many religious fundamentalist groups complained that the series was 'leading innocent children down the rosy road to Hell' (1990: 139), they also point out that among the fan mail were letters from children writing to 'Uncle Barnabas', a figure they watched daily 'struggling with "being bad" himself, just knowing he would understand their own conflicts'. Similarly, 'teenagers identified with Barnabas' loneliness and isolation. His desire to fit in was forever blocked, much like the adolescent audience *Dark*

Shadows was drawing' (Clark, Resch and Robin 1990: 124). Benshoff's audience research further highlights that *Dark Shadows* fans represent a broad cultural mix, coming 'in all shapes and sizes, ages, sexes, classes, colors, and sexualities' (1993: 52), holding 'a special appeal for gay and lesbian individuals' (54). The representation of the monster in this series spoke to the outsider in each of its fans, and perhaps explains their long term commitment to the show.

In a move that prefigured the merchandising often built around many American cult TV series (*Buffy, Torchwood, True Blood, Dexter*), ABC, recognizing the fans' dedication to the series, launched an extensive merchandising campaign to build upon the success of Barnabas, and later Quentin, and encourage audience identification with these TV monsters. The types of merchandise associated with the show were diverse, like the series' audience. Products aimed at children included colouring books, bubble-gum cards, board games, comic books, glow-in-the-dark posters, Barnabas Collins' Halloween costumes and 'plastic vampire fangs, adjustable to any juvenile mouth' (Fox 1968: 41). Time Industries Inc. licensed the rights to produce a costume replica of Barnabas' signature ring, while Paperback Library published a total of 32 *Dark Shadows* novels, recounting the further adventures of Barnabas and Quentin Collins between 1966 and 1971. The series even produced four recordings of *Dark Shadows* music, with the Original Series soundtrack entering the top 20 of Billboard's national album chart in 1969, and the single *Quentin's Theme (Shadows of the Night)* being nominated for a Grammy and reaching 'Number 13 on *Billboard*'s Hot 100 by August 1969' (Clark, Resch and Robin 1990: 144). These examples of merchandising encouraged the audience to immerse themselves in the *Dark Shadows* world and follow (or imagine) the actions of their favourite characters outside of the TV text, in a pre-digital version of Brooker's overflow. Board games, colouring books, novels and costumes enabled children and adults to extend the *Dark Shadows* narrative and imaginatively interact within this fictional world, encouraging one now-famous fan, Johnny Depp, to want to become Barnabas Collins: 'I was obsessed with Barnabas Collins. I have

photographs of me holding Barnabas Collins posters when I was five or six' (quoted in McDaniel 2009). The phenomenal success of the single *Quentin's Theme* stands as a unique example of overflow, as its continued replay on radios in 1969 allowed the romanticism of the gothic soap opera to seep into the *Dark Shadows* fan's real life. The sales of these musical soundtracks enabled fans to re-experience aspects of their favourite show long before the show became the first soap opera to be sold in syndication and later released on video and DVD.

The phenomenal success of this unusual soap opera meant that in an unexpected twist of television celebrity the cast were regularly called upon to make appearances on television talk shows, such as *The Dick Cavett Show* and the *Tonight Show*, as well as at live events from state fairs, supermarket openings and car showrooms. Barnabas Collins even appeared at a charity event for underprivileged children taking place at the White House (Clark, Resch and Robin 1990: 150-151). This level of mainstream popularity was highly unusual for either a soap opera or horror text. The unique mixture of the two forms that combined to make the monsters everyone's friends, brought TV horror a unique mainstream acceptance, beyond the genre's more traditional niche audiences. The live public appearances, in particular, reinforced the notion that audiences were more intimately involved with these characters, whose lives they watched daily on television, by providing them with 'embodied, social interactions' as opposed to the 'one-way interactions' associated with traditional forms of celebrity (Hills 2010c: 236). As one fan clearly articulated, 'It was moody and gothic and the characters became my friends' while another explained 'Collinwood was my home. I remember it with *great* fondness' (quoted in Benshoff 1993: 53).

Dark Shadows was a prototype horror series, unleashing a pantheon of ghouls and ghosts to scare its daytime TV audiences and pushing the boundaries of what was acceptable on television. By using its serial narrative to enable these monsters to expand beyond their monstrosity and the fans to recognize within these creatures their own feelings of isolation, the show gave birth to the sympathetic

monster that would become a defining feature of TV horror for years to come, not simply because it made the monster palatable for television audiences, but because it allowed audiences to see the human within the monster and the monster within the human.

TORCHWOOD – THE MONSTROUS HERO

While not obvious at first glance, *Torchwood* has much in common with *Dark Shadows.* Where *Dark Shadows* uses TV seriality to gradually present the monster as sympathetic, *Torchwood* uses seriality to deconstruct Captain Jack Harkness' representation as a hero by revealing him to be increasingly monstrous. With his matinee idol good looks and winning smile, it may seem perverse to refer to *Torchwood*'s Jack as a monster. He is the ideal image of a hero, possessing handsome features, confident stance, physical strength, iconic and instantly recognizable attire, charm and decisiveness in action. *Torchwood* is, however, part of a growing tradition in which the seemingly oppositional notions of heroism and monstrosity are problematized by focusing on the monstrous body of the hero. In so doing, Jack is aligned with other monstrous heroes such as Angel, and Dean and Sam from *Supernatural.* Judith Halberstam tells us that in 'postmodern gothic we no longer attempt to identify the monster and fix the terms of his/her deformity rather postmodern gothic wants us to be suspicious of monster hunters, monster makers, and above all, discourages investment in purity and innocence' (2006: 27). Recent TV horror takes this one step further by making the monster/alien hunters monsters themselves, and thus confirms Halberstam's argument that 'we need monsters and we need to recognize and celebrate our own monstrosities' (2006: 27), something also evident in *Dark Shadows*. So how can we see Captain Jack as monstrous and how does his monstrosity problematize the audience's identification with, and veneration of, the hero?

In the *Doctor Who* season finale 'Bad Wolf' (1.12), Jack is killed by Daleks only to be brought back to life by the Doctor's companion Rose, using the power of the TARDIS. It is later revealed in

Torchwood, a spin-off from *Doctor Who*, that since his resuscitation by Rose, Jack cannot die or, more precisely, he cannot stay dead. Jack dies regularly on *Torchwood* but his death is never permanent. Each time he lies motionless and then bursts back to life with a shocking gasp of breath as if he has clawed his way out of the grave or, in the language of *Torchwood*, out of the darkness. This regeneration is at the heart of his monstrosity as it parallels him with such classic screen revenants as vampires and zombies. Beneath that pretty face lies a body that, like his undead counterparts, is riddled with contradiction and abjection.

Noël Carroll argues that the horror genre is defined by the presence of monsters (supernatural or science fictional) and what distinguishes these monsters from those in fairy tales and fantasy stories is that they are deemed to be 'abnormal', a 'disturbance of the natural order' (1990:16). He further argues that being impure makes them 'abnormal', and by that he means 'categorically interstitial, categorically contradictory, incomplete, or formless' (1990: 32). This definition of the monster ties in neatly with Julia Kristeva's definition of the abject, which she argues is that which does not 'respect borders, positions, rules' but does 'disturb identity, system, order' (1982: 4). What these arguments share is an understanding that horror and monsters exist where borders are blurred: Jack is the point around which *Torchwood*'s preoccupation with the blurring of physical, gender and generic boundaries is located.

Firstly, Jack is coded as monstrous because he blurs the line between living and dead. This is emphasized by Jack's repeated deaths throughout the series: he is shot (sometimes by his own staff), stabbed, electrocuted, thrown off a building, buried alive in the earth, buried alive in cement, poisoned and even blown up. Natural order dictates that humans are born, grow old and die, but Jack neither grows old (or does so at such a slow rate that changes to his body are imperceptible) nor dies permanently. In fact, during 'Fragments' (2.12) it is revealed that Jack has died over 1,140 times in just over 100 years, demonstrating not only the impermanence of this death but the violence of his life. Jack's opposition to the natural order is reversed in *Torchwood: Miracle Day*. When it is revealed that

humanity can no longer die, Jack discovers that he is now mortal and must stave off poisoning and infection.

Jack is further coded as monstrous because his body is represented as physically abject. While his body, described throughout the series as handsome, strong, perfect and masculine, is repeatedly objectified and made the object of the gaze (male and female) of both onscreen characters and fans at home, it is also repeatedly penetrated, fragmented and broken on screen during each of his dramatic death scenes. While the broadcast of *Torchwood* on television, even at the more adult-oriented time slot of 9pm, means that these death scenes are not as replete with blood and gore as cinematic counterparts, they emphasize the physical rupture of the body, close-up and in detail.[43] In 'Immortal Sins' (4.7), a flashback to 1927 shows Jack captured by a group of local New York residents so terrified and amazed by his immortality that they repeatedly torture and murder him in order to witness his resuscitation. This sequence, produced for the BBC and the US Starz network, is the most graphic depiction of the violence enacted upon Jack.

Through these depictions, Jack's body is feminized, for both Kristeva (1982) and Barbara Creed (1993) argue that the female body is inherently abject and emphasizes – through menstruation, lactation and pregnancy – the permeability of bodily boundaries, rather than its completeness. Jack's regenerating body equally emphasizes this permeability as bullets/blades/bombs enter, create wounds and then heal themselves in a natural fashion. The first few times that this happens, his friends and colleagues are shocked, but by the end of the third series it is simply explained away with the statement 'this is what he does'. The feminizing of Jack is particularly highlighted in episode 1 of the *Torchwood: Children of Earth* serial, in which Jack is not only shot but has a bomb surgically implanted in his body in a reverse Caesarean section before he regains consciousness. The bomb is later discovered when his colleague Gwen is using Torchwood's advanced alien technology to give herself an ultrasound scan to detect if she is pregnant. When Jack touches her hand to congratulate her, the machinery reads his system and the image of

Gwen's body and the baby is replaced on screen by Jack's body with the bomb inside. This is followed by one of the most abject of Jack's deaths when he is literally blown into pieces. In this case he must not only come back to life but regenerate his entire body from the fragments that remain. As a result, Jack's ideal image of masculinity and heroism is made vulnerable by his abjection; the patriarchal order is threatened. Yet each recovery is also a testament to Jack's strength to silently endure the pain of these intensely physical deaths, and in part his masculinity is reaffirmed. After Jack was blown up, Ianto asks him if he felt it and he simply replies 'I felt it', but stoically provides no further detail on the extent of his torment ('Day Three', 3.3). The repetition of this cycle of rupture and restoration, however, means that his masculinity is not fully restored but rather that Jack represents a further example of the blurring of boundaries: here of binary notions of gender as he blurs the line between feminine and masculine. Jack's sexuality is another way in which he blurs boundaries, for as a fifty-first-century man, he is described as omnisexual (potential sexual partners now include men, women and other species), undermining any presumed opposition between hetero and homosexuality by presenting sexuality itself as fluid. As Matt Hills argues 'the program seems to naturalize bisexuality as unremarkable or as a given' (2010b: 279).

Jack also disturbs the narrative logic of the series in which time is presented not as linear but rather as fluid, folding in on itself, what the Doctor in *Doctor Who* describes as 'wibbly wobbly timey wimey' ('Blink', 3.10). But in contradiction, Jack is now a fixed point in time that unsettles all rules of time and space. As the Doctor explains to Jack in 'Utopia' (*Doctor Who* 3.11), 'It's not easy, even just looking at you Jack, 'cause you're wrong'. More importantly, Jack's existence on the border between life and death, like zombies and vampires, challenges traditional and spiritual conceptions of the afterlife, and therein lies the horror. Hills argues that '*Torchwood* is preoccupied with a materialist, atheistic stance in which there is no life after death; there is just blackness, an everlasting nothingness' (2010b: 277). Jack knows that which we are not supposed to know, what exists beyond the veil, and his news is not good. When asked, Jack repeatedly

informs others that there is no such thing as 'paradise', no heaven or hell, only blackness, a disturbing message for a show that features a high mortality rate among its lead characters. Death is a recurring feature on *Torchwood* and Jack is a reminder of the horror of that fate.[44]

The series further suggests that the nothingness has crept into Jack, transforming him into an unknowable being, no longer human. In the episode 'Greeks Bearing Gifts' (1.7), Toshiko is given an alien necklace that offers the power to read people's minds, but is unable to use it on Jack. When she tries, she hears nothing, as if, she tells Jack, he 'were dead'. This is reminiscent of the episode 'Earshot' of *Buffy* (3.18), when Buffy develops the ability to read minds but cannot hear the vampire Angel's thoughts. Angel explains that it is because he is a vampire, his thoughts are there but, like his body, they cast no reflection. Vampire Bill in *True Blood* similarly explains that Sookie can't read his thoughts because he is dead ('Mine', 1.3). But, unlike Angel and Bill who know that their minds are unreadable because they are vampires, Jack does not know what he has become, the extent of his difference or what purpose it will serve.

The unreadability of Jack's mind is but one characteristic he has in common with Angel and Bill, two of the most recent examples of the TV sympathetic or reluctant vampire who follow in the footsteps of Barnabas Collins. Milly Williamson argues that the sympathetic vampire is a 'symbol of pathos' as he struggles to control his abject body (2007), resisting who he is and the demands that his body makes of him. While Jack does not struggle with blood lust like the reluctant vampire, his character is largely defined by physical and psychical suffering caused by his immortal body. Immortality means repeatedly watching those you love grow old and die, or detaching yourself from emotional entanglements in order to avoid the suffering. Jack bears scars from both approaches. Furthermore, Jack's deaths are increasingly presented as violent and physically and emotionally traumatic, emphasizing intense physical suffering over death. For instance, in 'Exit Wounds' (2.13), Jack is first tortured by Captain John Hart and then forced to travel back in time to AD 27 where Jack is

buried alive by his brother Gray, as punishment for having supposedly 'abandoned' him to a lifetime of torment as a child. The trope of being buried alive is a recurrent feature of the reluctant vampire as they are often forced to suffer through their hunger while trapped within a coffin. In *Dark Shadows*, we are introduced to Barnabas after he has been locked in his coffin by his father for a hundred years while in *Angel*, Angel is trapped by his son Connor within a glass coffin and dropped in the ocean until he is found three months later. Both, like Jack, are punished by their family for their monstrous embodiment. Instead of starvation, Jack's suffering is pushed to extraordinary limits as he is forced to exist in a perpetual state of asphyxiation for 2,000 years – again at the hands of family. What's more, Jack takes this punishment as, like the reluctant vampire, he is marked by self-loathing, seeing himself as responsible for Gray's past and deserving of this fate. But it is also punishment for the monster he has become. This representation goes a long way towards presenting Jack as an almost messianic figure, willing to endure the un endurable for the good of the others and forgive Gray in the process. This image is consistent with the revelation in 'Fragments' of how Jack 'saved' each member of the team by inviting them to join Torchwood, and in 'The Blood Line' (4.10) when Jack sacrifices himself by draining away all of his blood in order to restore human mortality.

This messianic imagery, however, contrasts with Jack's morally ambiguous representation. Throughout the first two seasons, Jack is repeatedly shown to be the man who must make tough decisions and perform seemingly cruel or unfeeling acts in order to save the world, and as a result he often clashes with his own team. While in many cases the decisions he makes do seem to be right – destroying the cyberwoman ('Cyberwoman' 1.4), allowing the fairies to steal away a young child to prevent further violence ('Small Wonders' 1.5), or transporting a murderous alien directly into the sun ('Greeks Bearing Gifts') – his positioning of himself as judge, jury and executioner remains unsettling. His pragmatism is cold and clinical and undercuts his heroic ambitions to protect humanity. This is brought to its most extreme in the third season serial, *Children of Earth*, where it is

revealed that in 1965 Jack, along with the British Government, agreed to hand over 12 children to an alien race in exchange for an antidote to a global virus. One child, Clem, escapes and is haunted, not by the aliens, but by the memory of Jack, the man who tried to take him away, telling Jack: 'You are in every nightmare I've ever had' ('Day Four' 3.4).

Jack is Clem's worst nightmare, made all the worse by the fact that the man who doles out death cannot die himself. Jack's moral ambiguity reaches a crescendo when he chooses, despite his daughter's pleading, to sacrifice his own grandson in order to save the rest of the children of the Earth. While, again, this is presented as a pragmatic decision and a necessary sacrifice, it undermines the idealism that Jack himself aspires to, when earlier he tells the aliens that 'injury to one is injury to all' (see Fig. 10.1). He saves the world but at what cost? This serial's conclusion is a hollow victory and positions Jack within what Matt Hills and Rebecca Williams describe as 'elaborated abjection', which they argue 'challenges established generic and narrative classification' by blurring the line between 'good/evil' or 'monsters/victims' (2005: 214). Jack is both. He is cast as the victim, repeatedly murdered, tortured and made to suffer, but his inability to die also positions him as a monster for, as his daughter explains, 'the man who cannot die has nothing to fear' ('Day 4'). In this he is a hero who exists within the grey area between good and evil, fighting monsters while struggling with becoming one, a troubling hero for fans of a TV series more preoccupied with unsettling than reassuring its audience.

10.1 Anti-Hero in 'Day 5' *Torchwood: Children of Earth*

DEXTER: 'AMERICA'S FAVORITE SERIAL KILLER'

Denzell Richards suggests that ancillary and behind the scenes material made available for TV shows help to establish '"interpretative frames" which cumulatively suggest the "appropriate" contexts within which viewers are invited to consider and discuss the programme's creation, typically de-emphasizing points of contention'. He highlights the way such materials might be 'concentrating on actual production issues rather than commercial concerns' (2010: 185). With successful serial killer TV show *Dexter*, however, the ancillary materials also help set 'appropriate' contexts in which to view the show's protagonist, often described by Showtime as 'America's favorite serial killer'. The Parent's Television Council (PTC) campaigned to have *Dexter* banned from network broadcast when CBS started to show it in 2008, arguing that it might be acceptable on a pay-channel like Showtime, but 'a graphically violent, sexually explicit and profanity-laden program featuring a serial killer as its hero' (PTC) was not suitable for network TV. While Jes Battis admits how uncomfortable seeing huge poster adverts for *Dexter*'s new season stating 'America's favorite serial killer is back' (2010: 83) make him feel, Simon Brown argues that Dexter is actually relatively conservative in its moral framework (2010: 161-162). Such varying responses demonstrate how a story that 'encourages viewers to root for a murderer' (as the PTC argues) invites debate. Showtime's ancillary materials offer ways to 'read' the character and the show, managing its horror and making its serial killer 'hero' sympathetic, but also deliberately inviting discussion of its morality.[45] Indeed, these moral debates might be seen as a key element situating the show as 'quality' TV, often characterized as challenging in terms of subject matter and 'serious' in its thematic concerns. As Jane Arthurs notes, 'genres addressed to high-status audiences are allowed to be more explicit and controversial' in their representations of sex and violence (2004: 24).

Academic analysis of the show has frequently focused on this issue, with David Schmid arguing that Dexter is 'the quintessential serial killer of the post-9/11 era in that he is provided with an abundance of characteristics that make him a sympathetic, even identificatory, figure to the audience' (2010: 133). Dexter's 'code' (handed down to him by foster father, Harry) is the main factor here, and Schmid describes the way Dexter only kills uncaught killers as 'both the most audacious and the original aspect of the series, and the most important factor in the show's success' (2010: 136). Thus, especially in Season 1 as the show establishes itself, the audience might feel that Dexter's victims 'deserve' to die, since they are paedophiles, rapists or human traffickers. Furthermore, as Schmid notes, other characters 'make Dexter's violence look quite benign' (139), a strategy he compares to *Silence of the Lambs'* presentation of good and bad serial killers (140), and Dexter is positioned every season in relation to an unequivocally immoral figure, such as the Ice Truck Killer, Lilah, Miguel Prado, the Skinner, the Trinity Killer, Jordan Chase and the Doomsday Killer. For these reasons, Simon Brown concludes that *Dexter*, like other pay-channel quality TV drama may, 'push boundaries in terms of dialogue, imagery, content, and theme, but not, crucially, in terms of morality' (2010: 162).

As Stan Beeler points out, however, *Dexter* thus adopts 'narrative paradigms that are used in the construction of the popular culture vigilante hero and [has] given them an ironic twist which reveals some of the underlying ethical complexities of the tradition' (2010b: 221), just as recent treatments of Batman (both Tim Burton's and Christopher Nolan's films) have done. Other popular icons, such as the reluctant vampire (also a killer by nature who fights an addiction) seen in *Dark Shadows*, *Angel*, *The Vampire Diaries* and many more, or the corrupt cop like Vic Mackey in *The Shield*, serve similar purposes and are often presented as morally ambiguous anti-heroes. *Dexter* sits between these two examples: as TV horror it is less realistic than police drama (lacking the aesthetic of gritty realism that many police shows adopt), yet with a serial killer rather than a vampire protagonist, it presents its 'monster' as within the realms of possibility. Each of these examples consciously begs questions about

the morality of violence and vigilantism. Moreover, Dexter's code is also rejected, bent or changed at various points, especially in Season 3, which starts with Dexter killing someone he didn't plan on killing (Oscar Prado), then has Miguel Prado break the rules while bonding with Dexter and his pastime, and sees Dexter carry out a mercy killing on terminally-ill friend Camilla (an act presented as emotionally difficult and tragic). These moral complexities are followed up in subsequent seasons, through, for instance, Dexter's relationship with vengeance-seeking gang-rape victim Lumen in Season 5. Such challenges to the 'code' raise moral and ethical issues about what Dexter does and why (or whether) the audience should sympathize with him. The region two Season 2 DVD covers are emblazoned with the alternating quotations, 'Am I a good person doing "bad" things?' / 'Or a bad person doing "good" things?' Ancillary materials presented alongside the episodes themselves suggest responses to these challenges.

A *New York Times* article on *Dexter*'s move to CBS and the PTC challenge draws on production discourse as a means of presenting the other side of the argument. Brian Stelter is careful to begin by describing Dexter as 'a *sympathetic-seeming* serial killer [emphasis added]', and his victims as 'people *he believes* deserve to die [emphasis added]', distancing the character from the intentions of the creators or the message of the show (Stelter 2008). He also quotes Showtime president Robert Greenblatt on the strategies adopted to represent violence, mentioning 'hints' and editing ('then we cut away') as part of a suggestive rather than graphic depiction. Arguably this more 'artistic' or 'stylized' representation of Dexter's violence is emphasized even further in the extended narrative of the animated web series *Dexter: Early Cuts* (2009, now running to two seasons with *Early Cuts: Dark Echo*, 2010).

As we might expect, these web series reward attentive fans with references to familiar aspects of Dexter and his story: Deb makes a brief, typically foulmouthed appearance ('Gene Marshall'), family friends Camilla and Gene are mentioned (*Dark Echo*), we see Dexter buy his boat, originally named Slice of Heaven ('Gene Marshall'), take his first trophy blood slide ('Alex Timmons') and purchase his kill

clothes ('Cindy Landon'). Notably, both *Early Cuts* and *Dark Echo* feature more overt gore and violence: where the camera often cuts away from Dexter killing his victims in the TV episodes, here we sometimes see him make the kill and blood is not restricted to his trophy slides. The title sequences of both web series also highlight Dexter the killer, rather than his performance of ordinary humanity (as the opening sequence for the TV show does), showing syringes, knives and other killing tools, as well as blood. The web series deliver more violence, and Dexter is implicated more directly in it, but the animation (artistic and painterly in *Dark Echo*) potentially distances the viewer from this.[46]

As the title *Early Cuts* implies, these webisodes are effectively flashbacks: the first series follows Dexter's pursuit of three victims mentioned in 'Return to Sender' (1.6), and the second takes up after adopted father Harry's death. Thus, despite more graphic representation, Dexter sticks to the code in these extended narratives. Gene Marshall and Alex Timmons are, respectively, an arsonist who has killed 'seven innocent people', and a Marine sniper 'killing openly, under the cover of law'. Paralleling early victims in Season 1 TV episodes, the reasons Dexter takes their lives are clear and understandable, if not defensible. Likewise, the Victim Files section on the Showtime official *Dexter* site reinforces the victims' crimes as a means of 'justifying' Dexter, while the UK FX site also has a Harry's Code section, emphasizing the rules that control Dexter's actions. A featurette called 'The Code of Harry' is included in the region two Season 2 DVD set, where actors note that the code is Harry's way to avoid Dexter getting caught, and that while Dexter's urge to kill seems innate, the code that regulates his killing is imposed, stimulating debate about the morality of the code itself. Cindy Landon of *Early Cuts*, notably, is a little more problematic (she has killed a series of husbands) and her segment resorts to providing her a voice-over to make the character more unsympathetic by having her describe and comment on her crimes: 'My husbands have always supported my dreams. They just didn't know they weren't a part of them'. She also challenges both Dexter and the audience:

'Who the f*ck are you to judge me? You lied to me, you brought me here. You're the one holding the f*cking chain saw.' This is reminiscent of an earlier web series, *The Dark Defender*, based on Season 2's vigilante masked hero version of the Bay Harbor Butcher case. This short web series repackages kills from the TV episodes but spins them according to the perspective of the comic book 'hero', each ending with same lines written across the screen, 'Stalker of the night/ His blade of vengeance turns wrong/ into right', positioning the Dark Defender as a justified vigilante. Blurring Dexter into the Dark Defender begs all kinds of questions about vigilante violence.

Other ancillary materials seem less critical on the surface but continue to ask similar questions. The 2008 advertising campaign (archived on the Showtime website), depicting Dexter on the fictional covers of famous magazines (among them *Vanity Fair*, *GQ*, *New Statesman* and *Wired*) presents the character as a real serial killer. While some elements of the magazine 'articles' simply provide information about the characters, others offer 'interviews' with Dexter where he talks about being 'America's favorite serial killer'. The *Vanity Fair* pastiche has the interviewer outline American culture's 'obsession' with serial killers and ask what the fascination is. Dexter replies, 'We all have a secret side … Somehow it's reassuring to know I'm not the only one pretending to be normal', but later he stresses that the audience who have 'embraced' him '*should* be conflicted about it' (*Dexter* Showtime). Taking a slightly different angle, the *New Statesman* pastiche focuses on Dexter as an artist and his story as comparable with high culture, calling him a 'poetically appealing monster' and describing the way his story is 'worthy of Attic drama' (*Dexter* Showtime). Other articles parody the consumption of such morally dubious characters, offering rundowns on 'serial-killer chic' and flippant interview responses like 'Favorite TV show: I watch the Tudors for the beheadings'.

Merchandise, as some of these more pointed parodies suggest, is less willing to play at justifying Dexter and more directed to celebrating his identity as a killer. Here he really is 'undeniably killer' or 'American Homic-idol' (*Dexter* Showtime). Products available to buy include a board game, coasters in the form of trophy slides, silk

screen prints, an *Early Cuts* range, a Dark Defender action figure, bobbleheads, mugs and glasses, a viewing party kit (paper plates and cups decorated with bloody slashes) and a Kill Uniform. Slogans range through 'I ❤ Dexter' and 'Dark Passenger' to 'Slice of Life'. While the silk screen prints and *Early Cuts* products aim at high-end art or collector status, a rubber mat with the word 'Evidence remains. Please wipe well' and a 'What Would Dexter Do?' t-shirt might be considered tasteless. Likewise, while the Season 3 region two DVD release includes a game inviting viewers to match the season's victims to the relevant killer (Dexter, Miguel or the Skinner), the Season 2 DVD feature 'Victim Slides' simply allows the viewer to relive the kill, with brief clips from episodes, free from any justification or moralizing (except whatever might be included in the dialogue).

Dexter is thus offered by Showtime with a range of now-common ancillary and interactive material, such as podcasts, iPhone apps, a wiki that viewers are invited to contribute to and a Blood Spatter Analysis mini-site (featuring explanations of blood spatter patterns). Its extended narratives, ancillary materials and advertising highlight the tension inherent in Dexter's character, ensuring that the show's producers and creators cannot be accused (except by the extreme right) of promoting murder or vigilante action by continually foregrounding the moral grey area surrounding Dexter's kills. Yet it cannot dissociate the show and the character from the pleasurable side of horror fandom that celebrates enduring monster icons. From Frankenstein's monster and Dracula, to the slasher killers of the 1980s, these monsters have been hits with their audiences, and their popularity has been exploited in sequels and merchandise. Dexter may be unusual in that he is situated in the 'real' world, but his dark side holds the attraction. It is not Dexter the hard-working blood spatter analyst, or Dexter, husband and father, audiences want to celebrate with a t-shirt – it's America's favourite serial killer.

Whether audiences are drawn to the man within the monster or the monster within the man, TV horror uses the seriality and transmedia qualities of television to exploit and challenge horror fans' enduring love of monsters. In so doing, the genre increasingly implicates audiences in the moral ambiguity of these lead characters,

and offers an unsettling, at times disturbing, perspective on what happens when we invite monsters into our living room.

Conclusion

The Road So Far

This book was never intended to be the definitive word on TV horror. Rather, in it we have sought to contest the notion that 'real' horror does not and cannot exist on television. This expands the definition of what horror is, what it does and what it means. That horror on television draws from so many sources (surrealism, cartoons, comic books, serialized popular fiction, cinema) embeds it deeply within the genre itself as it exists across multiple platforms and media. As Mark Jancovich points out, consumers' 'image of the genre is drawn from a sense of continuity between these forms – even if they do not actually consume them' (1996: 13). Horror on TV, as mentioned in the introduction, has also been a key influence on producers of horror. Monster movies and B-pictures, sometimes watched on TV, are cited as formative moments by many horror writers and directors, including Stephen King, John Carpenter and Steven Spielberg (Jancovich 1996: 83), while Nigel Kneale's television work, and the quality of his writing, has influenced Carpenter and Joe Dante (Dyson 1997: 195). Fitting the genre to the medium of television produces several innovations, whether these are in sound, special effects, aesthetics, taboo material or contemporary themes. Furthermore, televisual formats such as the serial, the sitcom or reality TV interact with the genre's negotiation between fantasy and realism, resolution and openness, familiarity and novelty.

The preceding chapters have shown that horror has been on television from the earliest days of the medium and it has readily

adapted itself to changes in the TV landscape. Narrowcasting on pay-channels allows for more taboo-busting material to be aired on television, although horror is also flourishing on mainstream network television. Stephen King's change of heart about whether horror can work on TV has been reaffirmed repeatedly as shows such as *Masters of Horror* and *True Blood* demonstrate that graphic horror as well as classic, quality horror drama, and even children's TV or family entertainment, can be accommodated. No longer is horror 'the lowbrow's delight, the middlebrow's camp and the highbrow's trash' (John Simon quoted in Twitchell 1985: 4); it is everywhere, and accommodates a range of tastes and audiences.

The early decades of the twenty-first century seem to be witnessing a boom in TV horror, although this is undoubtedly related to the popularity of fantasy in general, such as the Harry Potter stories (in book and film versions), leading to more blurring of genre categories. Thus, the so-called Dark Romance phenomenon loosely encompasses TV as diverse as *The Vampire Diaries* and *True Blood*, and Matt Hills notes that earlier shows like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* or *The X-Files* were identified by viewers as belonging to varying genres 'depending on what intertexts they draw on' (2005a: 193). Notably, a recent offering like MTV's *Teen Wolf* is described on publicly-authored site Wikipedia in terms of genre as 'teen drama/supernatural/action/romance/dark comedy' but not horror. In contrast, UK channel BBC Three continues to use the success of 'much-loved and critically-acclaimed dramas' like *Being Human* to promote new drama such as *The Fades*, billed specifically as 'a new supernatural horror' (BBC press release 2011).

The much-publicised release of Tim Burton's recent *Dark Shadows* film also draws attention to the long history of horror on TV, and to the attachment viewers have for it (see star Johnny Depp's admission that as a child he wanted to be Barnabas Collins in Chapter 10). At one time it may have been true that 'fans cannot claim discovery or ownership over mainstream broadcast', as Hills suggests (2005a: 115), thus diminishing the fan-cult aspect of horror on television. However, the proliferation of ancillary material and extended narratives online and policies such as that of the BBC

dictating 'that online or other textual supplements must not be essential to the consumption and understanding of broadcast TV texts' (Hills 2010a: 29), ensure that not only can fans follow horror in traditionally fannish ways via TV, but that more TV viewers have adopted fan interactions with their favourite shows. As Jennifer Gillan points out of PVR recording technologies, 'studies have shown that their time-saving capabilities actually increase viewers' dedication to a series and their willingness to spend more time interacting with a series in other platforms' (2011: 222).

Horror will undoubtedly continue to be controversial on television, attracting concern for its negotiations of morality (see Chapter 10 on *Dexter*), or its displays of graphic violence (Miike's banned *MoH* episode). Strong subject matter in a horror-based children's drama like *The Demon Headmaster* (BBC One 1996–98) inevitably attracts debate (see Messenger-Davies 2001c) while the scheduling of horror on TV, as addressed in Chapter 1, is another area requiring negotiation. However, even in earlier eras of television, boundaries of acceptability were pushed. Not only did some TV prints of horror films leave in graphic scenes (Heffernan 2004: 169) but TV's *Quatermass* showed scenes at 8pm on Saturday nights that were later cut from the X-rated film version (Pirie 2008: 31). Such controversy merely demonstrates that TV horror continues to develop, to evolve and to do what horror does, as well as shaping perceptions of what horror is and how it operates.

Blockbuster horror author Stephen King describes seminal anthology show *The Twilight Zone* as depicting 'ordinary people in extraordinary situations', calling this 'a powerful concept' for TV drama (1981: 276). Whether TV horror continues to present ordinary people in extraordinary situations (deputy Rick Grimes facing a zombie apocalypse in *The Walking Dead*) or, alternatively, depicts extraordinary people in ordinary situations (a serial killer coping with the mundanity of being a husband and father in *Dexter*), the concept remains powerful and is reinforced by the very ordinariness of television itself. Where else do a vampire and a werewolf relax by watching their favourite television show but in TV horror?

Notes

1 See also: The Strog's list of scariest TV episodes on *Spoiler TV*, available at: http://www.spoilertv.co.uk/forum/viewtopic.php?f=52&t=1158 (accessed 24 September 2011); Halloween Addict.com's list of 'Top 5 Scary Creepy TV Episodes', available at: http://halloweenaddict.com/2008/10/top-5-tv-episodes-that-creep-me-out.html (accessed 24 September 2011).

2 All but one of the six 'assignments' (as the stories are called) were written by P.J. Hammond, who had subsequent success with standout episodes of *Torchwood* 'Small Worlds' (1.5) and 'From Out of the Rain' (2.10).

3 *Resident Evil* is the only franchise that follows the same character, Alice, from film to film. Even so, each film has a different environment, a new cast of surrounding characters and a new manifestation of the series' corporate villain.

4 The British mini-series *Dead Set* was similarly broadcast as individual episodes and then in one long omnibus.

5 Daytime soaps traditionally targeted women who were home raising their children (although there is also a large college-aged audience for soaps). The term soap opera originated from soap companies sponsoring programmes targeting housewives.

6 This after-life is discussed in more detail in Chapter 10.

7 The apocalypse is a far more unspecified endpoint than the startpoint of Mary Winchester's death, so that even when battle is rejoined between Lucifer and Michael at the end of Season 5, this does not close the series.

8 The AMC series *The Walking Dead* forms a TV serial from the popular zombie comic book series, created by Robert Kirkman.

9 All these names and images come either from the novel or from the James Whale directed film version.

10 John Polidori wrote the first vampire story in English, published in 1819.

11 This explanation parodies the show's usual style and ends with Mulder and Scully examining a fly with legs growing out of its mouth.

12 It is interesting that Garris does not take the same view of adaptation as producer of *Masters of Horror*, instead prioritizing the creative vision of the director and allowing his 'master' directors liberty to freely adapt material. This suggests that his 'fidelity' to King is connected to his position as a fan and King's status as writer and producer of the mini-series.

13 Romero and Craven were unable to contribute due to scheduling commitments.

14 Britain has a tradition of authorship in television, with TV writers such as Dennis Potter or Lynda LaPlante being attributed significant author status.

15 *The Road* is one of the many early television productions that is missing believed wiped. As no copies of the film still exist, discussion of the film is based upon Kneale's published script.

16 James Twitchell states that in film the Jekyll and Hyde story has 'from the very first' been a star vehicle (1985: 242).

17 Klein & Utterson take one of their names from a character in Stevenson's story; there was no potion that caused Dr Jekyll's transformation; Hyde's jumping on the body was inspired by his first appearance in the novella.

18 A number of these tropes recur in Moffat's 'Silence in the Library', and 'Forest of the Dead', as TV, telephone and computer all provide uncanny communication, human faces become information points, and communicators eerily repeat the dead's last words.

19 Producer Phil Collinson notes, however, that the sound of a cracking skull was removed as 'a bit too horrible' (quoted in

Chapman 2006: 200).

20 Miike has thus not worked exclusively in horror cinema, but much of his output is genre-based. *Audition* garnered him a reputation outside Japan, while *One Missed Call* brought international commercial success.

21 Berger (and the group) worked on several well-known horror films (*Day of the Dead*, *Hostel*, *Drag Me to Hell*) as well as fantasy movies (he won an Oscar and BAFTA for *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*). He now works on zombie TV series *The Walking Dead*.

22 Hendershot gives a fuller discussion of Carpenter and Dante's work for *MoH*.

23 And like the inhabitants of Salem's Lot in King's novel, the inhabitants of Bon Temps are ripe for corruption, revealing again the dark underbelly of polite society.

24 The only exception to this to date is Godric's death. He exposes himself to the sun and burns up in a spectral cloud of dust far more in keeping with cinematic vampire death, particularly Nyssa's death in *Blade 2*. This is partly explained to be the result of his age (although Russell who is 1,000 years older than Godric undermines this argument when his flesh slowly burns to a crisp when exposed to the sun). It would seem that Godric's self-sacrifice and desire for forgiveness in this scene play a part in his spectral death.

25 Here the deliberate recasting of Mitchell between the pilot and the series seems significant, given the move away from a more androgynous vampire in the pilot (played by Guy Flanagan) to an actor more conventionally handsome and masculine.

26 Not all vampires in *Being Human* are young and gorgeous: some are attractive, some ordinary, like Herrick and Cara. It is even implied that Herrick takes advantage of Mitchell's looks to help pick up women, something more fully articulated in Mitchell's online prequel.

27 John S. Bartley was nominated for an Emmy for cinematography for this episode.

28 'Hush' is listed as one of the top five scariest TV episodes of all time by Richard Lawson of TV.com.

29 Danny Elfman is a regular collaborator of Tim Burton, and his musical scores for *Edward Scissorhands* and *Batman*, among others, have become iconically associated with a fairy tale approach to horror.

30 The series creators openly acknowledge the obvious parallels between *Dexter* and *American Psycho* when 'Return to Sender' reveals that one of Dexter's aliases is Patrick Bateman.

31 Even before they find the body of his mother buried outside his trailer, Neil Perry is suspected of being the Ice Truck Killer in *Dexter* because, like Randy, his home is full of stuffed animal bodies.

32 This association with pantomime is reinforced in Season 1 of *Psychoville*, in which dwarf Robert acts in a pantomime of Snow White and Shearsmith plays the pantomime dame. The series also casts Christopher Biggins, a famous pantomime dame, as the panto's director.

33 Bainbridge notes that *Riget* was screened as a film at Venice before its broadcast on TV.

34 Other fantasy TV shows play with the carnival setting, in homage to *Freaks*: see *The X-Files* episode 'Humbug' (2.20), *Torchwood*'s 'From Out of the Rain' (2.10) and *The League of Gentlemen* (see Chapter 7), which all include carnival and sideshow characters.

35 Woods 1997: 112.

36 It is later revealed that Laura had the same dream before she died (episode 16).

37 *Riget* episodes are numbered consecutively from *Riget* I (1–4) into *Riget* II (5–8).

38 This is partly achieved through casting, as John Papsidera, casting director, explains: 'If you look at the photographs of Dorothea Lange. We tried to replicate that image of the Depression' (Papsidera).

39 Nigel Kneale's *The Year of the Sex Olympics* (1968) offers a prescient commentary on this approach to reality television. In it, the participants of a new reality TV show – *The Live Life Show* – are attacked by a killer on a supposedly deserted island. The wife is attacked and the husband kills the murderer, while the audience looks on, laughing. The producer concludes that audiences can enjoy all of these emotions because it isn't happening to them.

40 It's in Zachariah's interest to say this, of course, and the Winchesters are also experts at averting fate or destiny.

41 *Psychoville* similarly created websites for its main characters, see, for example, that for Goldfish Bowl Productions at http://www.goldfishbowlprods.co.uk/. Garth Marenghi also has 'his' own website: http://www.garthmarenghi.com/default.htm.

42 The contemporary *Dark Shadows* audio-dramas reunite original cast members David Selby, Lara Parker and John Karlen as Quentin, Angelique and Willie in a series of new stories taking place after Quentin's return to Collinsport. The stories build upon the original series, offering further adventures and character growth.

43 *Torchwood* was created to be the niche, adult spin-off of the family programme *Doctor Who* and was therefore initially scheduled for a post-watershed broadcast time of 9pm, allowing it to be more graphic than its parent-series, especially through a more open depiction of bi/sexuality. Graphic depiction of body horror has also increased but, compared to series such as *True Blood* or *Being Human*, the show is still restrained in its use of blood and gore.

44 This is even more apparent in series 4, *Torchwood: Miracle Day*, when all of humanity becomes immortal and the show becomes narratively pre-occupied with death. The final episode concludes with the miracle coming to an end, causing all kept alive by it to die simultaneously.

45 These are copied or reproduced by other channels airing the show, e.g. FX in the UK.

46 Schmid suggests that, as with other American TV violence, Dexter's killings are made acceptable, even pleasurable, through

stylization (2010: 136): this is arguably even more the case in the animated web series.

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Addams Family, The (ABC 1964–66)
Afterlife (ITV 2005–06)
Alfred Hitchcock Presents (CBS 1955–1960/NBC 1960–62)
American Gothic (CBS 1995–96)
Andy Griffith Show, The (CBS 1960–68)
Angel (WB 1999–2004)
Apparitions (BBC One 2008)
Ashes to Ashes (BBC One 2008–2010)
Attack of the Graske (BBCi 2005)
Babylon 5 (WB 1994–98)
Beasts (ATV 1976)
Being Human (BBC Three 2008–)
Belphégor (ORTF 1965)
Bewitched (ABC 1964–72)
Big Brother (Channel 4 2000–2010/Channel 5 2010–)
Blackbeard (Hallmark Channel 2006)
Blood Ties (Chum Television 2006–08)
Bones (Fox 2005–)
Boris Karloff's Thriller (NBC 1960–62)
Buffy the Vampire Slayer (WB 1997–2001/UPN 2001–03)
Carnivàle (HBO 2003–05)
Carrie (NBC 2002)
Casualty (BBC 1986–)
Century Falls (BBC 1993)
Chicago Hope (CBS 1994–2000)
Children of the Stones (HTV 1977)

Coronation Street (ITV 1960–)
Count Dracula (BBC 1977)
Count Duckula (ITV 1988–93)
Criminal Minds (CBS 2005)
Crooked House (BBC Four 2008)
CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (CBS 2000–)
Curb Your Enthusiasm (HBO 2000–)
Curse of King Tut's Tomb, The (Hallmark 2006)
Curse of the Black Widow, The (ABC 1977)
Danger Mouse (ITV 1981–92)
Dark Season (BBC One 1991)
Dark Shadows (ABC 1966–71)
Dark Shadows (NBC 1991)
Dead Set (E4 2008)
Dead Zone, The (USA Network 2002–07)
Demon Headmaster, The (BBC One 1996–1998)
Desperation (ABC 2006)
Dexter (Showtime 2006–)
Ding Dong School (NBC 1952–56)
Dixon of Dock Green (BBC 1955–76)
Doctor Who (BBC One 1963–)
Doctor Who Confidential (BBC Three 2005–11)
Dr. Kildare (NBC 1961–66)
Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog (2008)
Dr. Terrible's House of Horrible (BBC Two 2001)
Dracula (CBS 1974)
Duel (ABC 1971)
ER (NBC 1994–2009)
Fades, The (BBC Three 2011)
Father Knows Best (CBS 1954–60)
Fear Itself (NBC/ AXN Sci-Fi 2008–09)
Fear No Evil (NBC 1969)
Flintstones, The (ABC 1960–66)
Forever Knight (CBS 1989–96)
Frankenstein (ABC 1973)
Frankenstein (Hallmark 2004)

Frankenstein (ITV 2007)
Frankenstein's Cat (CBBC 2008)
Friday the 13th: The Series (syndication 1987–90)
Gargoyles (CBS 1972)
Garth Marenghi's Darkplace (Channel 4 2004)
George and Mildred (Thames TV 1976–79)
Ghostwatch (BBC One 1992)
Ghost Whisperer (CBS 2005–10)
Great Expectations (ITV 1991)
Grey's Anatomy (ABC 2005–)
Hammer House of Horror (ITV 1980)
History of Horror with Mark Gatiss, A (BBC Four 2010)
Holocaust (NBC 1978)
Homicide: Life on the Street (NBC 1993–99)
House (Fox 2004–)
I Dream of Jeannie (NBC 1965–70)
It (ABC 1990)
Jekyll (BBC One 2007)
Jerry Springer Show, The (syndication 1991–)
Kindred: The Embraced (Fox Network 1996)
Kingdom Hospital (aka *Stephen King's Kingdom Hospital*) (ABC 2004)
Knight Rider (NBC 1982–86)
Kolchak: The Night Stalker (ABC 1974)
League of Gentlemen, The (BBC Two 1999–2002)
Leave it to Beaver (CBS 1957–58, ABC 1958–63)
Life on Mars (BBC One 2006–07)
Lost (ABC 2004–10)
Man from UNCLE, The (NBC 1954–68)
Marchlands (ITV 2011)
Masters of Horror (Showtime 2005–07)
Masters of Science Fiction (ABC 2007)
Medium (NBC 2005–09, CBS 2009–11)
Merlin's Apprentice (Hallmark 2006)
Mighty Boosh, The (BBC Three 2004–)

Millennium (Fox 1996–99)
Mona the Vampire (YTV 1999–2003)
Moonlight (CBS 2007–08)
Most Haunted (Living 2002–11)
Munsters, The (CBS 1964–66)
Mystery and Imagination (ITV 1966–70)
NCIS (CBS 2003–)
New Avengers, The (ITV 1976–77)
Night Stalker, The (ABC 1972)
Night Strangler, The (ABC 1973)
Nightmares and Dreamscapes (TNT 2006)
Nineteen Eighty-Four (BBC One 1954)
Nip/Tuck (FX 2003–10)
Norliss Tape, The (NBC 1973)
North and South Book II (ABC 1986)
Northern Exposure (CBS 1990–95)
NYPD Blue (ABC 1993–2005)
One Step Beyond (aka *Alcoa Presents One Step Beyond*) (ABC 1959–61)
Outer Limits, The (ABC 1963–65, Showtime 1995–2000, SciFi 2001–02)
Passions (NBC 1999–2008)
Prime Suspect (ITV 1991–2006)
Psychoville (BBC Two 2009–11)
Pushing Daisies (ABC 2007–09)
Quatermass II (BBC 1955)
Quatermass and the Pit (BBC 1958)
Quatermass Experiment, The (BBC 1953)
Rentaghost (BBC One 1976–84)
Riget [*Kingdom*] (DR 1994)
Riget II (DR 1997)
Road, The (BBC One 1963)
Rod Serling's Night Gallery (NBC 1969–73)
Route 66 (CBS 1960–64)
Salem's Lot (CBS 1979)
Salem's Lot (TNT 2004)

Sapphire and Steel (ITV 1979–82)
Scooby Doo and the Witch's Ghost (1999)
Sea of Souls (BBC One 2004–07)
Sesame Street (NET 1969–70, PBS 1970–)
Sex and the City (HBO 1998–2004)
Shades (ITV 2000)
Shield, The (FX 2002–08)
Shining, The (ABC 1997)
Silent Witness (BBC One 1996–)
Simpsons, The (Fox 1989–)
Six Feet Under (HBO 2001–05)
Sixth Sense, The (ABC 1972)
Snow Queen (Hallmark 2002)
Sometimes They Come Back (CBS 1991)
Son of the Dragon (Hallmark Movie Channel 2008)
Stand, The (ABC 1994)
Stone Tape, The (BBC Two 1971)
Storm of the Century (ABC 1999)
Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde, The (CBC 1968)
Sopranos, The (HBO 1999–2007)
Supernatural (WB 2005–06, CW 2006–)
Tales from the Crypt (HBO 1989–96)
Tales from the Darkside (syndication 1983–88)
Tales of the Unexpected (aka *Roald Dahl's Tales of the Unexpected*) (ITV 1979–88)
Teen Wolf (MTV 2011–)
This Life (BBC Two 1996–97)
Tommyknockers (ABC 1993)
Totally Doctor Who (BBC One 2006–07)
Torchwood (BBC Three 2006–07, BBC Two 2007–08)
Torchwood: Children of Earth (BBC One 2009)
Torchwood: Miracle Day (BBC One/Starz 2011)
Trilogy of Terror (ABC 1975)
True Blood (HBO 2008–)
Turn of the Screw, The (ABC 1974)
Twilight Zone, The (CBS 1959–64 and 1985–89, UPN 2002–03)

Twin Peaks (ABC 1990–91)
Ultraviolet (Channel 4 1998)
Vampire Diaries, The (CW 2009–)
Veil, The (1958)
Walking Dead, The (AMC 2010–)
Walking with Dinosaurs (BBC One/ Discovery Channel 1999)
War and Remembrance (ABC 1988)
Weakest Link, The (BBC Two 2000–)
Werewolf (Fox 1987–88)
What Not to Wear (BBC Two 2001–03/ BBC One 2004–07)
What's New Scooby-Doo? (WB 2002–05)
Winds of War, The (ABC 1983)
Wire, The (HBO 2002–08)
Woman in Black, The (ITV 1989)
X-Files, The (Fox 1993–2002)
Year of the Sex Olympics, The (BBC Two 1968)

FILM

28 Days Later (Danny Boyle, UK, 2002)
Adventures of Tintin, The (Stephen Spielberg, USA, 2011)
Alien (Ridley Scott, USA/ UK, 1979)
American Psycho (Mary Harron, USA, 2000)
An American Werewolf in London (John Landis, UK/USA, 1981)
Audition (Takashi Miike, Jp, 1999)
Batman (Tim Burton, USA/ UK, 1989)
Blair Witch Project The, (Daniel Myrick/ Eduardo Sanchez, USA, 1999)
Brides of Dracula (Terence Fisher, UK, 1960)
Burnt Offerings (Dan Curtis, USA/ It, 1976)
Candyman (Bernard Rose, USA, 1992)
Child's Play (Tom Holland, USA, 1988)
Chronicles of Narnia, The: The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe (Andrew Adamson, USA/ UK, 2005)
Cloverfield (Matt Reeves, USA, 2008)

Company of Wolves, The (Neil Jordan, UK, 1984)
Dark Shadows (Tim Burton, USA, 2012)
Dark Water (Hideo Nakata, Jp, 2002)
Day of the Dead (George Romero, USA, 1985)
Dawn of the Dead (George Romero, It/ USA, 1978)
Dead of Night (Alberto Calvacanti/ Charles Crichton/ Basil Dearden/Robert Hamer, UK, 1945)
Deadgirl (Marcel Sarmiento/ Gadi Harel, USA, 2008)
Diary of the Dead (George Romero, USA, 2007)
Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde (Roy Ward Baker, UK, 1961)
Dr. Terror's House of Horrors (Freddie Francis, UK, 1965)
Dracula's Daughter (Lambert Hillyer, USA, 1936)
Drag Me to Hell (Sam Raimi, USA, 2009)
Entertainer, The (Tony Richardson, UK, 1960)
Exorcism of Emily Rose, The (Scott Derrickson, USA, 2005)
Exorcist, The (William Friedkin, USA, 1973)
Frankenstein (James Whale, USA, 1931)
Freddy vs. Jason (Ronny Yu, Canada/ USA/ It, 2003)
Friday the 13th (Sean S. Cunningham, USA, 1980)
Freaks (Tod Browning, USA, 1932)
Gremlins (Joe Dante, USA, 1984)
Halloween (John Carpenter, USA, 1978)
Haunting, The (Robert Wise, UK/USA, 1963)
Hellraiser (Clive Barker, UK, 1981)
Hills Have Eyes, The (Wes Craven, USA, 1977)
Hole, The (Joe Dante, USA, 2010)
Hostel (Eli Roth, 2005, USA, 2005)
House of Dark Shadows (Dan Curtis, USA, 1970)
Howling, The (Joe Dante, USA, 1981)
Human Centipede, The (Tom Six, Netherlands, 2009)
I Am Legend (Francis Lawrence, USA, 2007)
Ichi the Killer (Takashi Miike, Jp, 2001)
In Cold Blood (Richard Brooks, USA, 1967)
Interview with the Vampire (Neil Jordan, USA, 1994)
Land of the Dead (George Romero, Canada/ Fr/ USA, 2005)

Last Exorcism, The (Daniel Stamm, USA/ Fr, 2010)
Last House on the Left (Wes Craven, USA, 1972)
Let the Right One In (Tomas Alfredson, Sweden, 2008)
London after Midnight aka *The Hypnotist* (Tod Browning, USA, 1927)
Look Back in Anger (Tony Richardson, UK, 1959)
Martin (George Romero, USA, 1976)
Near Dark (Kathryn Bigelow, USA, 1987)
Night of the Living Dead (George Romero, USA, 1968)
Nightmare on Elm Street, A (Wes Craven, USA, 1984)
Nosferatu (F.W. Murnau, Ger, 1922)
One Missed Call (Takashi Miike, Jp, 2003)
Paranormal Activity (Oren Peli, USA, 2007)
Peeping Tom (Michael Powell, UK, 1960)
Plan 9 from Outer Space (Edward D. Wood, USA, 1959)
Phantom of the Opera, The (Rupert Julian, USA, 1925)
Poltergeist (Tobe Hooper, USA, 1982)
Profondo Rosso (Dario Argento, It, 1975)
Psycho (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1960)
[Rec] (Jaume Balaguero/ Paco Plaza, Spain, 2007)
Resident Evil (Paul W. S. Anderson, UK/ Ger/ Fr, 2002)
Ringu (Hideo Nakata, Jp, 1998)
Rosemary's Baby (Roman Polanski, USA, 1968)
Saw (James Wan, USA/ Aus, 2004)
Shaun of the Dead (Edgar Wright, UK/ Fr/ USA, 2004)
Shining, The (Stanley Kubrick, UK/ USA, 1980)
Silence of the Lambs, The (Jonathan Demme, USA, 1991)
Some Like it Hot (Billy Wilder, USA, 1959)
Son of Frankenstein (Rowland V Lee, USA, 1939)
Small Soldiers (Joe Dante, USA, 1998)
Texas Chain Saw Massacre, The (Tobe Hooper, USA, 1974)
Thing, The (John Carpenter, USA, 1982)
To Kill a Mockingbird (Robert Mulligan, USA, 1962)
Tootsie (Sydney Pollack, USA, 1982)
Un Chien Andalou (Lois Buñuel, Fr, 1929)
Vampire Lovers, The (Roy Ward Baker, UK/ USA, 1970)
White Noise (Geoffrey Sax, Canada/ UK/ USA, 2005)

Wicker Man, The (Robin Hardy, UK, 1973)

'From Twin Peaks *to* Buffy the Vampire Slayer, *and* Dark Shadows *to* The Simpsons, *check the index with the lights on, because your favorite show is probably lurking in here somewhere. This thorough, thoughtful and entertaining look at horror on television deserves to be devoured by writers, analysts and fans. You will definitely find something in here to make your pulse jump and your eyes open wide.'*
—Jane Espenson, writer/producer: ***Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Battlestar Galactica, Game of Thrones, Once Upon a Time.***

'Alert to horror's histories and hybridities on TV, Lorna Jowett and Stacey Abbott cast a forensic gaze over this previously dark continent. From aesthetics to "kitchen sink gothic" to monster fans, TV Horror *bristles with brilliant ideas and analyses a wealth of examples. Then: horror on TV was often dismissed as all sizzle and no steak. Now: challenging old debates over authenticity, Jowett and Abbott prove themselves to be the new (scholarly) masters of horror.'*
—Matt Hills, author of ***The Pleasures of Horror*** and ***Triumph of a Time Lord.***

Horror is one of the most pervasive of contemporary TV genres with shows like *True Blood, Being Human, The Walking Dead* and *American Horror Story* making a bloody splash across our television screens. Yet not too long ago critics and horror writers claimed that television and horror were incompatible bedfellows. *TV Horror: Investigating the Dark Side of the Small Screen* explores the often contradictory relationship between horror and television and shows how this most adaptable genre has continued to be a part of the broadcast landscape, unsettling audiences and pushing the boundaries of acceptability.

Lorna Jowett and Stacey Abbott demonstrate how TV horror continues to provoke and terrify audiences by bringing the monstrous and the supernatural into the home, whether through adaptations of Stephen King and classic horror novels, or by reworking the gothic and surrealism in *Twin Peaks* and *Carnivàle*. They uncover the omnipresence of horror in mainstream television from procedural dramas to children's television and, through close analysis of landmark TV auteurs including Rod Serling, Nigel Kneale, Dan Curtis and Steven Moffat, as well as case studies of *Dark Shadows, Dexter, The League of Gentlemen, Pushing Daisies, Torchwood,* and *Supernatural*. They expand debates about the nature of horror by exploring its evolution on television. The historical breadth of the discussion, alongside detailed analysis of an exciting and diverse selection of television series, makes this book a must-have for those studying TV genre, as well as for anyone with a taste for the gruesome and the macabre.

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